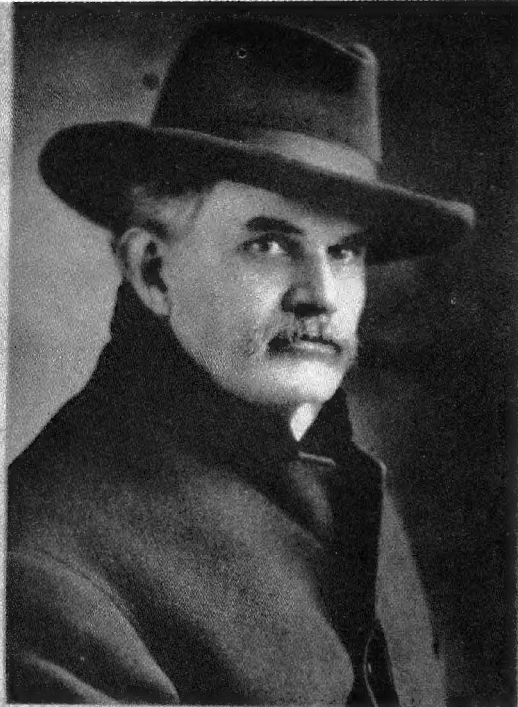


JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS



Very truly your friend

John D. Williams

Dear Joe

This is not as handsome as I am, but it is sufficient to excite your envy.

Permission of Joseph P. Tumulty, Washington, D.C.

JOE TUMULTY'S PICTURE OF WILLIAMS

JOHN SHARP
WILLIAMS

*Planter-Statesman of the
Deep South*

By
GEORGE COLEMAN OSBORN

GLOUCESTER, MASS.
PETER SMITH
1964

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PREFACE

On September 29, 1932, the *New York Times* expressed the hope that "John Sharp Williams' whims, his learning, his weaknesses, the touch of genius in him; his strong individualism and originality" would in time find "a competent, sympathetic but impartial biographer." To the reader is left the task of deciding how well this work fulfills that hope.

Senator Williams, unlike some of his contemporaries in public life, cared very little, if at all, for the occupation of any conspicuous place in American history. Since he had a nonchalant attitude toward consideration by historians of the part which he played in public life, it is not unfair to him to admit that he was careless in preserving his letters and public papers. Soon after he retired from the House in March, 1909, for a two-year period of extensive reading and preparation for a further career in the Senate, he piled all of his official correspondence and papers—ten mail pouches of them—into a huge pile and burned them. Mrs. Williams told the author that she tried to prevent her husband from carrying out his decision to destroy this valuable historical material, but the Senator-elect having once made the decision immediately performed the deed. As Williams was a devoted student of history, he perhaps realized the loss and hastened the destruction of the biographical material before he could be persuaded to change his decision.

Because of this act many problems that the biographer of Williams would like to solve must remain unsolved, or at least the solution cannot be substantiated by source material. The greatest problem, perhaps, related to the part that Williams as minority leader played in organizing

the House Democrats into a unified, coherent, functioning group, which, with the aid of the Republican insurgents, was able to overthrow the Reed-Cannon rules of procedure. Although the overthrow occurred after Williams left the House, his leadership was unquestionably very powerful in laying the foundations which made the later victory possible.

With the public correspondence which accumulated during his senatorial career, Williams was not so unkind to his biographer. More than 25,000 letters and papers were saved, and after his death most of them found their way into the Division of Manuscripts of the Library of Congress. Although not neglecting newspapers, magazines, the *Congressional Record*, and numerous other published materials, primary and secondary, of the period of Williams' senatorial career, the writer has chosen to rely heavily upon the Williams Papers in order that the subject of the biography may be portrayed as far as possible in his own words.

The author cannot acknowledge publicly all sources of help in the preparation of this biography. Constructive criticisms, suggestions, and unusual courtesies are acknowledged to the staff of the Mississippi State Library at Jackson; to Major Frederick Sullens, editor of the *Jackson Daily News*; to Dr. Thomas P. Martin of the Division of Manuscripts of the Library of Congress; to Frank E. Lorraine of the Library of Congress; to the late Senator Pat Harrison of Mississippi; to Joseph P. Tumulty, formerly secretary to President Woodrow Wilson; to several members of the Williams family; and to Professor William O. Lynch of Indiana University under whose supervision the work developed. Allan Nevins of Columbia University and Dr. T. Walter Herbert of the University of South Carolina have read the manuscript and made valuable suggestions. Dr. Wendell H. Stephenson and Dr. Fred C. Cole have made constructive criticism in the preparation of the final

draft. Margaret McMillen Osborn has worked and encouraged much more than her husband deserved. While gladly acknowledging the aid and help of these and others, the writer retains full responsibility for all mistakes which yet remain.

GEORGE C. OSBORN

Learned, Mississippi

August 12, 1942

*TO MARGARET, JEAN
AND BETTY*

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Chapter I

ANCESTRY

ACCORDING to romantic legend the whole Williams clan was exiled from Wales by Oliver Cromwell and sailed to North Carolina in three ships under the leadership of Bishop John Williams.¹ Accurate history reports that John Williams came alone from Marionethshire to Virginia near the close of the seventeenth century.² At least two of John's grandsons found life in the Old Dominion too monotonous and moved over into the Piedmont of North Carolina. One of them, Joseph, obtained a grant for thousands of acres of land on the Yadkin and built his home, Panther Creek, about two miles from Shallow Ford. The occupants of Panther Creek saw many important events which we now call history. Daniel Boone crossed the Yadkin at Shallow Ford on his way to Kentucky, and the army of Cornwallis passed there during the Revolution. Three of Joseph's sons won places for themselves in public life. John fought under Andrew Jackson at Horseshoe Bend, and later served as Senator from Tennessee. Robert served as a member of Congress from North Carolina and was appointed by President Jefferson to serve as governor of the Mississippi Territory from 1805 to 1809. Lewis served in Congress so long that he was known as "Father of the House." He lived in Panther Creek after his father's death, and the house became famous as a meeting place for the élite of North Carolina society. Clay

¹ Harris Dickson, *An Old-Fashioned Senator, a Story-Biography of John Sharp Williams* (New York, 1925), 10.

² John Sharp Williams to Allison R. Williams, October 13, 1931, in possession of Allison R. Williams, Washington, D.C.

and Calhoun and other notables were entertained there, and on at least one occasion Lewis rode horseback with Clay to Washington after Clay had stopped at Panther Creek for a few days.³

The other grandson of the Welsh immigrant who left Virginia for North Carolina was John Williams. He wore the British uniform in the French and Indian War.⁴ When the Revolution broke out, Williams served as lieutenant colonel of the Hillsboro Minute Men and soon was promoted colonel of the Ninth North Carolina Line. Later he served under George Washington in New Jersey and under Nathanael Greene in North Carolina. After the war he was named Surveyor of the Western Lands of North Carolina. John Williams left his home and moved into this region, which became Tennessee, and settled near Knoxville.⁵

The children and grandchildren of John Williams drifted westward, and in the 1830's his grandson, Christopher Harris Williams, lived at Lexington in Henderson County, Tennessee, where he was spoken of as one of the three "most outstanding residents . . . in the county."⁶ Christopher Harris was listed as one of the five members of the bar in Lexington in 1834.⁷ In 1836 he was elected to Congress as a Whig from the old Memphis district. Although the Williams family previously had been Jeffersonian Republicans, both the North Carolina and Tennessee branches of the family became anti-Jackson men in the 1830's and joined

³ John W. Cannon, "Panther Creek Homestead," in *Winston-Salem Journal*, March 13, 1927. For information on Joseph's three sons, John, Robert, and Lewis, who served in Congress, see *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1927* (Washington, 1928), 1705-1707.

⁴ *Congressional Record*, 66 Cong., 1 Sess., 8208.

⁵ Because of the part played by John Williams in the Revolution, his great-great-grandson, John Sharp Williams, became a member of the Society of the Cincinnati in 1914. See Dunbar Rowland (ed.), *Official and Statistical Register of Mississippi, 1920-1924* (Jackson, 1924), 10-13; *Minutes of the North Carolina Society of the Cincinnati* (Raleigh, 1933), 295-308.

⁶ Samuel C. Williams, *The Beginnings of West Tennessee, In the Land of the Chickasaws, 1541-1841* (Johnson City, 1930), 133.

⁷ *Morris' Tennessee Gazetteer* (Nashville, 1834), quoted in *ibid.*, 220.

the ranks of the Whigs. The reason for the hatred for Jackson seems to have been that the General failed to give due credit to Colonel John Williams who had commanded the Thirty-ninth United States Infantry in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend.⁸ Christopher Harris served in Congress from 1837 until 1843 and again from 1849 until his voluntary retirement in 1853.

Williams sat in Congress when such prominent leaders as Webster, Clay, Calhoun, and Benton were at the forefront. He became one of Daniel Webster's numerous friends. Just how intimate this friendship was we do not know. It was of such a nature that Webster felt free to ask the loan of \$150. Although the Tennessee Congressman felt confident of the safety of the loan, his grandson later related that it was never repaid.⁹

Congressman Williams had several children, among whom was a son named after his father. Christopher Harris, Jr., moved from Lexington to Memphis, and, choosing his father's profession, went into Henry G. Smith's law office. Later he became Smith's partner, and still later the firm became "Williams and McKisick," with an office on the north side of the Court Square.¹⁰ On May 30, 1853, the successful young lawyer married Anne Louise Sharp, a young woman whose ancestry was as fine as his own. Her grandfather had been a major in the Revolutionary army, and her father, John McNitt Sharp, was captain of Company A, Mississippi Rifles, under the command of Colonel Jefferson Davis during the Mexican War.¹¹

Christopher Harris and Anne built a home far enough out of the city that they could have an orchard, garden, and

⁸ Williams to Miss Lucile Banks, July 13, 1928; August 5, 1930, in possession of Miss Lucile Banks, Memphis, Tennessee.

⁹ Interview with Williams, October 27, 1928.

¹⁰ Williams to Miss Lucile Banks, November 6, 1928, in possession of Miss Banks. See also, *Memphis Daily Appeal*, November 1, 1859.

¹¹ General Zachary Taylor's Report, March 6, 1847, in *Senate Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., No. I, 139.

pasture.¹² On July 30, 1854, their first child was born and was named John Sharp Williams. "Johnny," as John Sharp was known to his playmates, became an orphan early in life. His mother died during the boy's fifth year.¹³ The mother's death was due to complications which followed the birth of Christopher Harris, John Sharp's younger brother. In the genealogical section of the old family Bible, written in the handwriting of the bereaved husband, are these words: "She was a devoted wife and mother—full of affection and tenderness in both relations and a pure-in-heart Christian." Anne Williams left three children, all sons. Duke, the second child, lived only a little more than two years after his mother's death. He died October 1, 1861, three weeks before his fifth birthday.¹⁴

One of John Sharp's earliest recollections was that of living in the suburbs of Memphis before the war, playing with his little friends, Jim Anderson and Jack Swearingen. Jack could draw "pictures of horses and knights with helmets and breastplates and lances in rest. . . . I thought it was the most wonderful thing in the world, especially as I could tell which was the horse and which was the man and which was the helmet and which was the breastplate and which was the lance, without having Jack tell me." ¹⁵

One other incident of these early years was later recalled. In the company of his father, "Johnny" attended a county fair near Memphis where a "tournament" was being held. Various military companies drilled in contest for a prize. The company "dressed like French Zouaves," and under the command of Judge Anderson, the father of Jim, won first prize. At this county fair the lad acquired his first con-

¹² Williams to Miss Lucile Banks, November 6, 1928, in possession of Miss Banks.

¹³ See the Williams Family Bible, Cedar Grove Plantation, for genealogy from colonial days.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Williams to Mrs. Sally A. Swearingen, April 5, 1918, in Williams Papers (Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress). Unless otherwise designated, all Williams papers cited hereafter are in this collection.



Permission of Frederick A. Stokes Company

JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS, THREE YEARS OLD

**THIS DAGUERREOTYPE HANGS ON THE SAME HOOK BESIDE THE MANTEL
WHERE GRANDMA SHARP PLACED IT NEARLY SEVENTY YEARS AGO.**

ception of war, a concept which was to undergo a great evolution during his lifetime.¹⁶ Williams later characterized himself in these earlier years in Memphis as "the most bashful, quiet, retiring little cuss that I have ever heard of."¹⁷ He did confess that he sometimes ran away from home and went over to visit his Aunt Flora Aspasia Narcissa—"Aunt Nan" for short.¹⁸

When the southern states began to secede and many knew that war was inevitable, Christopher Harris' mother said to him: "Kit, you are a Whig; you are opposed to secession; let the Yankees and the secessionists fight this war." Kit's reply was, "Mother, the time has passed for a gentleman to determine whether he shall fight or not. The only question is which side shall he fight on. I can not help kill Anne's kinsfolk."¹⁹

After the death of his mother, John Sharp's father played the role of both father and mother to his sons. Such a relationship drew the sons very close to their father. As the war began, Christopher Harris organized a group of soldiers in Henderson County in western Tennessee. His courage and bravery were of such a type that he won promotion rapidly. John Sharp visited with his father much of the time during the opening years of the War Between the States. They were together during the encampments at Bowling Green, Kentucky; Memphis, Tennessee; and Corinth, Mississippi. Little Johnny much preferred to stay with his father and undergo the hardships of military camps rather than to remain at home with his grandmother. The afternoon before the battle of Shiloh, the child was sent with a trusted slave back to Memphis. This was the final farewell between father and son. Christopher Harris, in the capacity of colonel, led the Twenty-seventh Tennessee Volunteer In-

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Williams to Mrs. Flora Clark Huntington, February 4, 1922, *ibid.*

¹⁸ *Id.* to Miss Lucile Banks, November 6, 1928, in possession of Miss Banks.

¹⁹ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 1 Sess., 236-37.

fantry in the Confederate army. Against the advice of his men, he unduly endangered himself and was killed in action on April 6, 1862.²⁰ He was under General Albert Sidney Johnston, who followed Colonel Williams in death within a few hours. The Colonel's body was the first officer's corpse brought back to Memphis after Shiloh. On April 8 the *Memphis Daily Appeal* contained a notice of the funeral service, which was to be held at the Williams' home. "Hacks will leave Faherty's store on Union Street at eight o'clock, for persons wishing to attend."²¹ After the service, an impressive procession accompanied the body to the station. Captain Sharp had come to take his dead son-in-law to his last resting place at Cedar Grove Plantation—the Sharp home near Yazoo City, Mississippi. Fearing for their safety if the Federal army took Memphis, Captain Sharp took Christopher Harris' children, his mother, his sister, and her children to the plantation also. "It was the right and generous thing to do and he did it and that was all."²²

Colonel Williams had been killed "just as he was taking the Yankee battery at a salient point." He died because he thought it was "nobler to die with his friends and neighbors than to live without patriotic, sectional sentiment." The father left to his sons "some land and an opportunity to obtain a good education." He left John Sharp nothing more precious than "the memory of . . . devoting his life to sentiment."²³ Today, a visitor to the family graveyard may read one sentence on his father's tombstone—"He died on the field of honor at Shiloh."

Captain Sharp also gave his life for the Confederacy. He died some four months later, not from military activity but

²⁰ *Memphis Daily Appeal*, April 23, 1862, carried a list of the casualties at Shiloh.

²¹ *Ibid.*, April 8, 1862.

²² Williams to Miss Lucie Banks, November 6, 1928, in possession of Miss Banks.

²³ *Ibid.* to Robert H. Reed, April 3, 1917, in Williams Papers.

from exposure. His body was placed in a near-by grave in the same family cemetery. His death left Cedar Grove, a three-thousand-acre plantation between Canton and Yazoo City in the south central part of Yazoo County, in complete control of women and small children.

Here on the plantation of his maternal ancestors, with his step-grandmother, John Sharp and his young brother Kit spent most of their youth. The mistress, and after the summer of 1862 the owner, of the plantation had an unusually large number of slaves. That she dealt kindly with them was attested by the elder of these lads years later.

"My early boyhood was spent on a plantation of 150 slaves. I was eleven years of age when the war closed. I remember only three plantation punishments: One a man whipped for stealing, one a woman whipped for general and dangerous prostitution, and the other was that of a man, who was kept on bread and water for two weeks, because he had in a mutual fray killed his brother. The last finally met with the penalty—unprecedented on that place—which he dreaded most, and tearfully attempted to escape—sale." ²⁴

The slaves were grateful for the kindly treatment of Grandmother Sharp and almost all of them remained loyal to her throughout the war. In 1863 Federal troops were plentiful in central Mississippi, and foraging expeditions were made to all of the plantations. Cedar Grove was no exception. The Negroes were encouraged to come within the Federal line, but the slaves at Cedar Grove chose to remain at their work on the plantation.

On one occasion a Federal officer and a few companions remained in the Sharp home for several days. When they left, the officer handed Mrs. Sharp a five-dollar bill to pay for meals and accommodations for himself and his companions. This elderly Scotch lady had such strength of reso-

²⁴ John Sharp Williams, *Thomas Jefferson, His Permanent Influence on American Institutions* (New York, 1913), 79.

lution and loyalty to the South that she tore the bill into pieces, threw them to the floor, and crushed them with her feet "as a perhaps useless and amusing, but very determined demonstration in the presence of the enemy of her faithfulness to the Confederacy and its money."²⁵

Such actions by many women of the Confederacy might have had an unusual effect upon the soldiers at the front. Years later, when John Sharp had become a man and had acquainted himself with the history of the war, he one day chanced to meet an old Confederate veteran. The following conversation ensued:

"I can understand how you boys kept on fighting after Gettysburg and after Vicksburg, but I do not understand how you kept it up after the retreat from Nashville. You knew you were whipped, did you not?"

"Oh, God, John," the veteran replied, "everybody knew we were whipped."

John Sharp interrogated further, "Why did you keep it up?"

"We were afraid to stop."

"Afraid of what?" asked Williams.

"Afraid of the women at home, John. They would have been ashamed of us."²⁶

A short time before his death Grandfather Sharp gave Johnny a slave boy, Allen, as a personal servant. Both the Negro and the white boy interpreted this as the highest honor that could be bestowed. Allen was commanded to receive orders only from his new master. One day as they were playing in the yard, Allen saw two imported Spanish Merino rams butting on the lawn in front of the house. Allen challenged Johnny to a similar match.²⁷ The chal-

²⁵ Williams to Mrs. Helen H. Gardener-Day, August 12, 1915, in Williams Papers.

²⁶ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 1 Sess., 1909.

²⁷ Dickson, *Old-Fashioned Senator*, 17-22. Dickson has Johnny the challenger. In an interview with Williams, December 3, 1929, he insisted that Allen was the challenger.

lenger and the challenged went down on all fours, faced each other, and, at the given command, charged. As Mrs. Sharp revived her grandson with cold water and towels, Allen looked on much surprised and perplexed. Nearly half a century later when Congressman Williams was running for the Democratic nomination for the United States Senate in the campaign of 1907, he replied to a statement by his opponent, Governor James K. Vardaman, that there was nothing that a white man could not beat a Negro doing, by suggesting that he try a butting match with Allen.

John Sharp followed daily at the heels of his step-grandmother as she supervised the routine tasks of the plantation. In a few of his inclinations, however, he was unlike the average boy reared on a large plantation. He would not go hunting. He never squandered so much as one hour hunting in his life because he could derive no pleasure from killing a harmless animal.²⁸ Never did he cast with a reel or bait a hook. As he expressed it, "I would lose what mind I've got if I had to sit and watch for a silly fish half a day."²⁹

²⁸ Interview with Williams, December 3, 1929.

²⁹ Ruth Hall, "Habits of John Sharp Williams," in *Jackson Daily Clarion-Ledger*, June 12, 1906.

Chapter II

EDUCATION

EARLY in his youth Williams became interested in books. He was fortunate in having access to the works of such excellent authors as Herodotus, Plutarch, Shakespeare, Milton, Defoe, Swift, Pope, Fielding, Smollett, Hume, Robertson, Gibbon, Burns, and Scott in the library of the Sharp home.¹ Although the future statesman spent many hours reading eagerly, he never outgrew his ambition to have time to read more books.

His education, which was to continue for several years, began in private schools in Yazoo City during the war. Upon the cessation of military warfare the lad was placed in a Memphis school. Williams later recalled this trip to Memphis in 1865: "When I was a boy, dressed in home-made clothes, made upon the plantation during the war out of wool off of our own sheep and cotton grown in our own field, spun and woven on our hand spindles and looms, when the war had just closed they were carrying me to Memphis to put me in school." ² He and Luly, his old nurse, traveled "upon an open flat car, protected from the sun by a rather awkwardly rigged up canopy of tent canvas." On this journey John spent his last ten-dollar Confederate bill for "three sticks of red and white peppermint candy from an old woman on the front streets of Grenada, Mississippi." Both Lee and Johnston had surrendered. The money was

¹ "Savoyard," "John Sharp Williams," in Jackson *Daily News*, September 3, 1907.

² *Cong. Record*, 60 Cong., 1 Sess., 4356.

even then worthless. The woman probably "took the ten dollar bill for her own amusement." ³

While in Memphis, young Williams became deeply interested in religion. It was for him a period of religious curiosity. He visited several churches and finally united with the Episcopal.⁴ This choice of church affiliation was rather unusual because he came from a family of Methodists and Presbyterians. Perhaps he recalled the old saying in the South to the effect that, of the many roads to Heaven, "a gentleman would travel only the Episcopalian way." ⁵ However that may be, years later Williams married into a family of Presbyterians. All of his eight children, after reaching the age of accountability, joined the Presbyterian church of their mother.⁶

At the age of thirteen this plantation lad entered the Kentucky Military Institute at Lyndon. Congressman Williams sarcastically remarked years afterward: "I spent two years as a cadet being taught the duty of not walking pigeon-toed and [of] getting up to a drumbeat and going to bed when a horn blew." ⁷ As a cadet he played baseball, usually performing behind the plate for the Academy nine; but he was more interested in history, English, mathematics, Latin, and the books that could be found to read. These years of excellent discipline did him a great deal of good. He was started off "with a love of study." ⁸

The University of the South located at Sewanee, Tennessee, admitted young Williams on June 9, 1870. The university, founded and supported by the southern dioceses of the Protestant Episcopal Church, could offer to the prospective student only a few crude wooden structures, but with General Josiah Gorgas as president the institution success-

³ Williams to Mrs. Gardener-Day, August 12, 1915, in Williams Papers.

⁴ Dickson, *Old-Fashioned Senator*, 6-7.

⁵ Avery Craven, *Edmund Ruffin, Southerner* (New York, 1932), 26.

⁶ Williams to Fred Sullens, May 9, 1915, in Williams Papers.

⁷ *Cong. Record*, 59 Cong., 1 Sess., 3167.

⁸ Williams to C. W. Fowler, August 4, 1916, in Williams Papers.

fully battled poverty.⁹ The university had been reopened only two years when Williams entered.¹⁰

For three or four days after arriving at Sewanee he occupied a large room with seven other students. One of these, an upperclassman, was William C. Gorgas, later to achieve fame in the construction of the Panama Canal. Several of the upperclassmen came into the room occupied by Williams and others with the determination to haze the the newly matriculated freshman. Williams seized Gorgas' boot, which was covered with mountain mud, and "laid out" the leader of the would-be hazers. He then demanded a fair fight with the main antagonist. The Mississippi plantation lad was given his demand and "got a clean, fair whipping as a result."¹¹ Although he was defeated, his idea of chivalry and honor was satisfied. Armistead C. Leigh, a fellow member of the Sigma Epsilon Society, remembered Williams as a "very close student . . . quite popular with both faculty and student body . . . [and] as a bright boy with tously hair and ill fitting uniform."¹²

Sewanee at that time apparently had "a whole lot of good rules and a whole lot of unnecessary ones."¹³ Williams broke one too many of them, and, as a result, his sojourn of six months terminated rather suddenly. It happened in this way: "John Sharp Williams, a thin, scrawny, beardless youth was sitting on the grass one morning and did not arise to salute General Gorgas when the latter approached. Perhaps he did not see the tall soldierly figure of the West Point martinet, or perhaps he did not feel like apologizing for an oversight, but at any rate they told the

⁹ Marie D. Gorgas and Burton J. Hendrick, *William Crawford Gorgas, His Life and Work* (Garden City, N.Y., 1924), 42-43.

¹⁰ Mrs. R. G. Dudley (Registrar) to author, May 4, 1937, in possession of author.

¹¹ Williams to Miss Jessie Gorgas, December 20, 1920, in Williams Papers.

¹² Armistead C. Leigh to author, June 17, 1937, in possession of author.

¹³ Williams to Gorgas, January 5, 1921, in Williams Papers.

lad . . . to pack up his clothes and go home and John Sharp Williams went." ¹⁴

Thus unceremoniously did Williams leave the only institution he ever attended in which he failed to complete his course of study. Years later the expelled student, then a member of the United States Senate, was invited to deliver the baccalaureate address to the graduating class at Sewanee. Although the Senator had long since forgotten any bitterness he might have had toward Sewanee, he was unable to accept. Only a short time before he declined the invitation to speak, he had visited the university and enrolled his grandson as a student. ¹⁵

As the country gentlemen of England usually looked toward Eton as the proper place for the higher education of their sons, so a large number of the younger landed aristocracy of the South were predestined for the University of Virginia at Charlottesville. It was beyond a doubt the leading university of the South at that time. As soon as he reached home from Sewanee, John Sharp decided to enter the University of Virginia within a few weeks. He matriculated at the middle of the session of 1870-1871, ¹⁶ and remained there until after the close of the regular session in the summer of 1873. Williams did not try for any academic degrees because the qualifications included subjects in which he was not interested. In the sessions of 1870-1871 and 1871-1872 he took Latin under Professor William E. Peters and modern languages under Professor M. Schele De Vera. Professor George F. Holmes's classes in history, literature, and rhetoric were also a part of John Sharp's program during his first semester at Charlottesville; in his second year, moral philosophy under Dr. William H. McGuffey, of

¹⁴ Fred Sullens, "Sewanee, America's Oxford, Where Men Are Made," in *Jackson Daily News*, August 26, 1928.

¹⁵ A. D. Knight to Williams, April 29, 1918; Williams to Knight, May 4, 1918, in *Williams Papers*.

¹⁶ Williams to W. T. Hope, February 12, 1918, *ibid*.

McGuffey Readers fame, was substituted for the classes under Professor Holmes. In the summer of 1872 the name of Williams appeared on "a list of graduates" of the courses of French and moral philosophy. In 1872-1873 Williams matriculated in German under Professor Peters, in natural philosophy under Professor Francis H. Smith, and in history, political science, and literature under Professor Holmes. A course in mineralogy and geology he soon found distasteful. A list of "proficients" issued on July 3, 1873, for those who had done satisfactory work in literature, rhetoric, and political science contained Williams' name.¹⁷ He "was naturally bright and was always ready in class work."¹⁸

No student who entered the University of Virginia at this period came because of his athletic ability. Anyone could enroll in the university, but only those who were proficient in their work could receive a degree. Athletics were not stressed, and Williams took very little part in any form of strenuous exercise. There were no rules of conduct at Jefferson's institution. Each student signed a pledge upon entering to obey the laws of the state of Virginia and to conduct himself as a gentleman. If there was any ungentlemanly conduct, the student body, through its self-government, took charge of the case. Only on rare occasions did the faculty ever sit in judgment upon the misbehavior of any student. The student body decided that hazing encouraged bullying on the one side and cowardice on the other, and should not be tolerated.¹⁹

Williams found time during these years for visits to Miss Mary Baldwin's Academy, a girls' school located at Staunton, Virginia. The girls extended invitations to the boys at Charlottesville to attend various school exercises. On one

¹⁷ Jack Dalton (Librarian) to author, June 1, 1937; J. Malcolm Luck (Alumni Secretary) to *id.*, August 6, 1937, in possession of author.

¹⁸ Robert Hughes to *id.*, October 10, 1937, *ibid.*

¹⁹ John Sharp Williams, "The University of Virginia and the Development of Thomas Jefferson's Educational Ideas" (a paper read at a meeting of the Association of State Universities at St. Louis, Mo., June 28, 1904), in Williams Papers.

of these occasions Williams accompanied several of his schoolmates to attend an operetta. As he sat in the audience watching the play, he became greatly interested in the young lady who played the leading part. One of his friends arranged a meeting at the social which followed the performance, and John Sharp was presented to Miss Betty Dial Webb, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Webb of Livingston, Alabama. The acquaintance was followed by correspondence, and a friendship soon ripened into an enduring love. Occasionally the girls, with permission from home, were allowed to visit Charlottesville. Miss Betty visited in the home of the chaplain of the university, and here Williams "partially made love to the girl of his choice."²⁰ Before June, 1873, the lovers were engaged to be married,²¹ but the wedding date could not be set because John Sharp was already making plans to complete his education abroad.

At the University of Virginia at this time there were two literary societies, the Jefferson and the Washington. Many prizes offered in connection with campus life were hotly contested by members of these two groups. Williams was a member of the Jefferson Literary Society and took part in all of its activities. Each society presented at the close of the year a gold medal to the member who, in the opinion of his associates, was the best debater in the senior class. The presentation of this medal occurred near the commencement, at what was called the "society closing night." Williams won the gold medal of his society in 1873, an achievement to which he later referred as one of the proudest moments of his life.²² It was a recognition of the ability and power of debate which characterized him throughout an extended public career.

Professor McGuffey offered an annual prize for the best scholar in his moral philosophy class. Williams won it,

²⁰ Williams to Miss Pauline Witherspoon, June 26, 1915, *ibid.*

²¹ Interview with Allison R. Williams, October 6, 1937.

²² Williams to W. Clarence Eikner, May 19, 1920, in Williams Papers.

"hands down." McGuffey required the competitors to read aloud to him their final examination papers. Williams and R. T. W. Duke, members of the class, were the only ones present when Williams read his paper in McGuffey's study. As Williams left the room the teacher said to Duke of Williams, "a wonderful young man. Pity there are not more like him in my classes. He ought to accomplish a great deal in the future."²³ Williams' ability received further recognition when he was admitted to the Phi Beta Kappa honorary scholastic society. For many years he was a member of the Virginia Beta Chapter.²⁴

During Williams' senior year he roomed next door to Lucius C. Embree of Princeton, Indiana. As a Northerner, Embree was not popular among the students; he was often alluded to as "that damned Yankee." But Williams soon became his intimate friend. Embree, Williams, and one or two others often went on long hikes into the country; they "built fires and cooked on a shovel." Embree affectionately called John Sharp "Josh." The friendship between these two men remained strong even when one became a Republican judge and the other a Democratic Representative and Senator. During political campaigns Williams, stumping for the Democratic party, sometimes went into the Hoosier state. On such an occasion in October, 1916, he spoke at a Democratic rally in Princeton, and Embree spoke in a near-by town at a Republican rally. This did not prevent Williams from staying in Embree's home nor from talking over old days and swapping jokes between toddies before and after the speaking engagements.²⁵

As the years passed, the ideals of the University of Virginia meant more to John Sharp, and his interest in his alma mater at Charlottesville became more pronounced. In 1914 he was elected to the presidency of the Alumni

²³ R. T. W. Duke, Jr., "John Sharp Williams," in *Corks and Curls* (University, Va., 1915), 5-9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Louise Embree to author, October 16, 1937, in possession of author.

Association and served for two successive years. He wrote of the 1915 home-coming commencement that "There were a lot of the old boys there, whose hospitality came very near to putting me out of business."²⁶ During these two years Williams visited alumni clubs over the country. It was a period of expansion for the university with the addition of several new schools under serious consideration. Williams urged a school of governmental science and a school of Spanish.²⁷ The interested alumnus continued for many years to attend the annual meeting of the Alumni Association.²⁸

Sometime during his years at the University of Virginia, Williams decided definitely that his future career would be that of a politician. Realizing that "no uneducated man can accomplish much in statesmanship that will leave a lasting impression upon those that succeed him,"²⁹ he decided to pursue further his education. Naturally evading such schools as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, because this was the era of Reconstruction, the young man decided to go abroad. He entered the great German institution at Heidelberg, an ancient school founded in the fourteenth century by Elector Rupert I. At Heidelberg he continued studies in the fields of his special interests.³⁰

Attending the university at the same time were Samuel S. Mehard, Nathaniel French, and Cuthbert Jones.³¹ On

²⁶ Williams to Goodwin H. Williams, June 25, 1915, in Williams Papers.

²⁷ *Id.* to Lewis D. Crenshaw, August 10, 1915, *ibid.*

²⁸ See Williams Papers for letters.

²⁹ Williams at presentation of James Z. George portrait to Mississippi State Department of Archives, January 22, 1908, quoted in *Jackson Daily News*, January 22, 1908.

³⁰ In an attempt to secure information from Heidelberg in regard to Williams' student days, the writer met with an unexpected answer: ". . . in Decennium von 1870 bis 1880 eine Reihe von studenten names Williams hier immatrikuliert waren, aber keiner trug die Vornomen John Sharp." D. H. Fiuke to author, October 12, 1937, in possession of author.

³¹ Williams to Franklin K. Lane, October 28, 1915; *id.* to Lindley M. Garrison, April 23, 1914, in Williams Papers; Dickson, *Old-Fashioned Senator*, 36.

July 4 these American students decided to celebrate in the American way. They raised the American flag and became too patriotically American in their celebration. As a result they got into trouble with the authorities. Since the American Vice-Consul at Heidelberg was German, Williams and his friends would not think of going to him. They went to the British Consul, who "pleasantly and very laughingly got us out of the trouble in very short order."³²

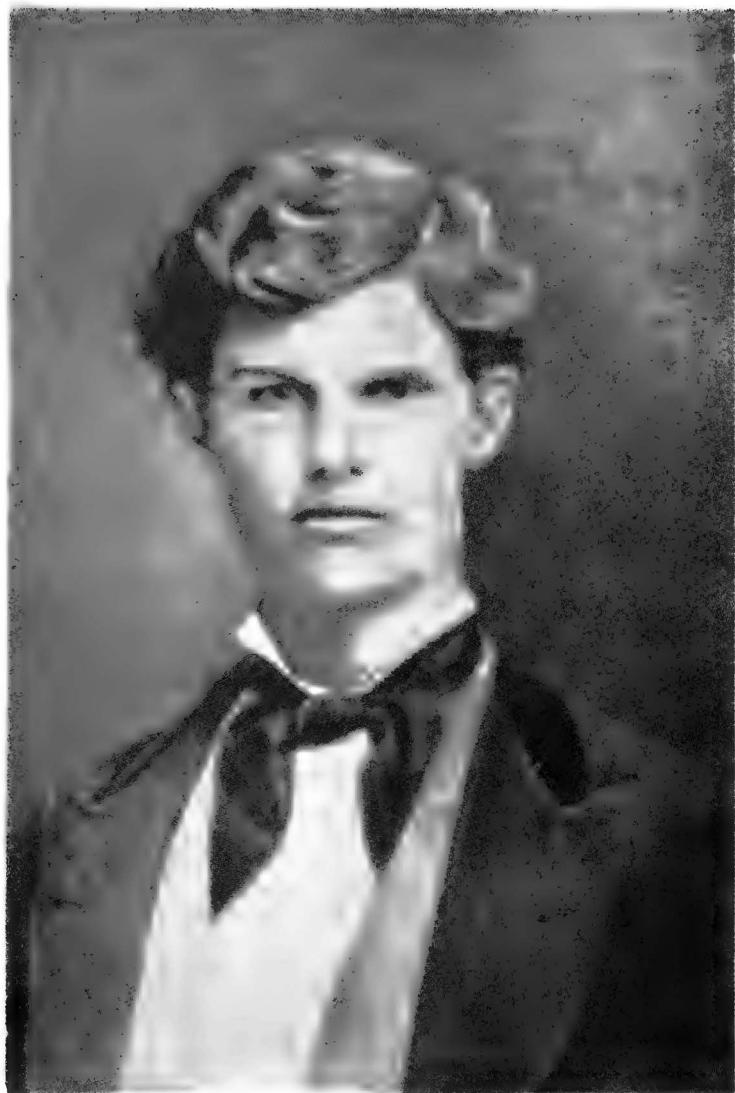
While a student at Heidelberg, Williams met many German people, some of whom he learned to know intimately. "The man who inhabits the borders of the Rhine, the man who inhabits Bavaria and Wurttemberg—easily moved to tears, and easily moved to laughter, and easily moved to rage—is a man whom I have learned to love."³³ Several of the men who became national leaders of the twentieth-century German Empire were contemporary students with Williams at Heidelberg. He was not, however, a classmate of Wilhelm II as Champ Clark stated in his memoirs.³⁴

Williams' sense of humor did not harmonize with that of the Junker-Prussian. He soon learned that the Prussian military cadets, especially the officers, were very overbearing. In the late winter of 1873-1874 Williams and Jones, who was from Louisiana, were strolling down the street. Snow, ice, and sleet covered the sidewalk. Soon there loomed in front of the Americans two Junker-Prussian military cadets who were taking all of the walk. There was no way to get around them except by getting into the street. John Sharp whispered to Cuthbert just before they met the German youths that if the Prussians did not share the sidewalk equally, he was going to throw the outside one into the street. Jones quickly objected, but

³² Williams to William J. Bryan, April 13, 1914, in Williams Papers.

³³ John Sharp Williams, "The Ties That Bind: Our National Sympathy with English Traditions, the French Republic, and the Russian Outburst of Liberty," in *National Geographic Magazine* (Washington), XXXI (1917), 281.

³⁴ Interview with Williams, October 27, 1928. See Champ Clark, *My Quarter Century of American Politics* (New York, 1920), II, 265.



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WILLIAMS AS A STUDENT AT HEIDELBERG

his plan carried no weight with his determined companion. The German army cadets strutted up. Williams threw one with ease into the snow and ice in the gutter of the street. The German arose very angry and began to stammer his name. Williams, knowing the German code of honor, quickly gave his card to the German officer. The Junker's seconds soon called at Williams and Jones's room to arrange a duel. Williams, having received the invitation for the duel, had the choice of weapons. He chose pistols and Jones under no condition was to back down from that choice. After some minutes of arguing the seconds accepted the pistols. The time for the duel was decided. At the duly named place and time Williams and Jones appeared. The positions were arranged. The Junker at the given command wheeled and fired quickly, missing his American antagonist. Williams had not fired. The German seconds asked Jones if his principal wanted to have his shot. "Of course," insisted Jones. Williams coolly took deadly aim, then turned quickly and fired into a snowbank.³⁵

Perhaps it was this incident and other characteristics of the Prussian military system with which Williams came into daily contact that soon discouraged him from continuing his studies at the German university. After attending lectures at Heidelberg for more than eight months, he went to a branch of the College of France at Dijon. At that time many people were accepting the Germans' estimate of themselves, but Williams thought them slow and stupid.³⁶ Williams remained at Dijon for more than a year, taking courses in French literature and French history and playing "with exceeding great activity."³⁷

During his stay of more than two years in Europe, Williams traveled extensively. Trips were made to practically

³⁵ Dickson, *Old-Fashioned Senator*, 36-42. Dickson has written erroneously that Williams issued the challenge to the duel and had the choice of weapons, a privilege always belonging to the challenged.

³⁶ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 2 Sess., 8408.

³⁷ Williams to R. H. Dabney, September 19, 1922, in Williams Papers.

all the countries of continental Europe. Often at the sacrifice of seeming necessities he went to see objects of historical interest and to attend lectures.³⁸ The Rhine at that time carried passengers and tourists in large numbers. Steamers plied back and forth from Cologne to Coblenz, to Mainz, and as far into the interior as navigation was possible. Williams, in the company of other Heidelberg students, went as far inland as Mannheim, for the purpose of hearing some of Wagner's operas.³⁹ At times, however, extravagances were indulged in. Years later Williams recalled that during his student days in France, he once visited Monte Carlo, "but like a fool undertook to break the bank. I am forty-seven or forty-eight years older than I was then, but I am almost as big a fool now as then and I am afraid that if I went back again I would try the old job over with the old results." ⁴⁰

The vast store of information which young Williams received at firsthand from his sojourn in Europe later proved a valuable asset to him in his chosen profession. Very few men in national politics had the familiarity with the customs, traditions, attitudes, and ideals—in short, the civilization—of the various countries of Europe that he had.

Realizing that a legal education was the best gateway into the arena of political action, Williams began the study of law at the University of Virginia after his return from Europe in 1876. Moreover, he was a member of a tribe of lawyers: "My father was one. His father and his grandfather were lawyers, and my grandfather's grandfather was one, and far back as I know they were all lawyers." ⁴¹ The young man had gained some practical experience in law by working during several summers in the law office of Turley, Harris, and McKisick in Memphis.

³⁸ Interview with Williams, September 13, 1928.

³⁹ *Cong. Record*, 64 Cong., 1 Sess., 8453.

⁴⁰ Williams to Thomas Nelson Page, January 18, 1921, in Williams Papers.

⁴¹ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 2 Sess., 2800.

When Williams enrolled at Charlottesville, he found the law school under the direction of Professor John B. Minor, whose courses had made him "famous throughout the Southern states." Professor Stephen O. Southall, "a man of many amiable qualities . . . of varied culture and fine native talents," shared classes in the law school with Professor Minor.⁴² "The course in the regular school of law could be still completed in one year, although it was the advice of both of the professors that its study should be protracted over two."⁴³ Although only about 18 per cent of the total enrollment of Professor Minor's classes "won the degree of bachelor of laws"⁴⁴ during the decade between 1870 and 1880, Williams received his law degree at the end of one year's study.

In later life, Williams, when reflecting on his varied education, realized the great changes that had been wrought since his youth. He "suffered from an old-fashioned education" in that he knew nothing about modern applied sciences.⁴⁵ His teachers had taught him to think as well as to remember. He was encouraged "to tell the truth, to prize honesty, and to be brave." These qualities, in his opinion, were more valuable than what was learned in his classes.⁴⁶ Finally, his education had been liberal and he possessed to a marked degree the spirit of Thomas Jefferson. These traits were, in his own words, "the greatest needs of American democracy."⁴⁷

⁴² Philip A. Bruce, *History of the University of Virginia, 1819-1919* (New York, 1920), IV, 1-2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 2 Sess., 3613.

⁴⁶ Williams to W. Clarence Eikner, May 19, 1920, in Williams Papers.

⁴⁷ *Id.* to J. S. Pargon and Fred W. Scott, October 26, 1920, *ibid.*

Chapter III

ENTRANCE INTO PUBLIC LIFE

SOON after receiving his law degree from the University of Virginia, Williams was admitted to the Tennessee bar. He was fortunate in beginning his legal career as a member of the Memphis firm in which he had worked during vacations for several years. In the early months of his full professional connection with Turley, Harris, and McKisick, the briefless lawyer read extensively in literature. One day Williams went to a member of the firm and, in a superior voice, said to him, "Mr. Turley, I want you to get me appointed to the superintendency of the Cossitt Library." Turley knew that if Williams' studiousness became sealed behind a librarian's desk, the legal profession would be robbed of a promising attorney. Hence Turley laughed Williams out of the idea.¹

The seriousness of this young man can be better understood by recalling that it was now four years since he had become engaged to be married. Miss Betty and John Sharp had not seen each other often during these long years, but letters had passed between them. On October 2, 1877, a few months after the young lawyer had completed his course, the couple were married in Livingston, Alabama. Elizabeth Dial, always spoken of as Betty by her husband, was the only child of Dr. Robert Dickens and Julia Fulton Webb. Dr. Webb had been born in North Carolina and trained in medicine at the University of Virginia. He had gone to Alabama in the 1850's to practice his profession in

¹ *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, September 29, 1932.

Livingston and Birmingham. Members of the Webb family "always believed in college education for its men and women" and were "outstanding in the communities in which they lived."² The marriage of Betty and John Sharp Williams united two fine old southern families.

Eight children, four boys and four girls, were born to this union. Their names in the order of their birth were Mary Sharp, Robert Webb, Anne Louise, John Sharp, Julia Fulton, Allison Ridley, Sally Shelby, and Christopher Harris. Seven of these children lived to adulthood; Anne Louise died of diphtheria at the age of thirteen months.³

At the time Betty and John Sharp were beginning their life together, the South was in the pains of Reconstruction. To describe the hardships that were common throughout the region would be to describe those that prevailed at Cedar Grove Plantation. The place had become heavily encumbered with debt. The young lawyer decided several weeks before his marriage that he must return and assume direct control of Cedar Grove. Taking into consideration the conditions on other plantations throughout the South, one realizes that although the Sharp place was \$100,000 in debt this was not an evidence that it had been managed dishonestly. The overseer of the plantation had to adapt himself to new conditions. He supplied all his tenants with everything for their living. Only cotton was planted, with the hope that the crop would sell for enough to repay all the borrowed money. The scheme did not work and Cedar Grove plunged deeper into debt. Nevertheless, the manager had been unsparing in his allowances to John Sharp while the latter was attending universities in America and abroad. Much credit is due to the plantation overseer for making it possible for the future statesman to secure an

² Mrs. Anita Stewart Armstrong to author, October 5, 1938, in possession of author; Mrs. John Sharp Williams to Miss Lucile Banks, September 27, 1924, in possession of Miss Banks.

³ See genealogical table in the Williams Family Bible at Cedar Grove Plantation.

unusual education and thus equip himself for his career.

It was into these conditions that John Sharp brought his bride in 1877. The winter rains had not yet begun, and the roads were dusty. They were met at Vaughn's Station by a dilapidated carriage that had seen service for many years. Only part of the damage it suffered during the Civil War had been repaired. On the way to Cedar Grove the bride became thirsty. Her husband of a few days had the servant drive by the Ledbetter home several miles from Cedar Grove. As soon as the carriage came to a stop near the front door the bridegroom hastily got out and went into the neighbor's house to bring some water. He chatted for a few moments with Mrs. Ledbetter, who, following him to the front, inquired: "Who is the young lady in the carriage, John?" The quick reply was: "That's just a young lady with me, whom, by the way, I married a few days ago." ⁴

At the Sharp home they were met by aging Grandmother Sharp, who, homespun clad, must have presented a striking contrast to the dainty bride. After a good cry Betty soon acclimated herself to her new environment.⁵

These were years of work and thrift. Williams had to borrow funds "to put the property into condition, to make money, and to make the place pay itself out of debt." During these years, he afterward admitted, he lived "like a fifty dollar drygoods clerk." ⁶

There is much difference between studying philosophy, metaphysics, French, German, and law, and managing a large plantation. Williams was not experienced in many types of work required. For instance, there was the time when the new owner set out personally to oversee the roofing of a building on the place. He had laborers begin nailing the new shingles at the peak of the roof and work down. After part of the house was completed a rain gave abundant proof of the error that the scholarly plantation manager

⁴ Interview with Kit Williams, October 20, 1937.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Williams to Joe M. Chapple, November 6, 1916, in Williams Papers.

had made. The rest of the house was then covered correctly, beginning at the bottom and working to the peak of the roof, while the first shingles had to be torn off and replaced.⁷

Of some one hundred fifty slaves who had been on the plantation only three left when they were given their freedom. The regular wages paid to the laborers, if Williams' memory was correct, was \$12.50 per month besides supplies. He offered \$15.00, whereupon neighbors protested vigorously. Williams wanted dependable labor, and so he said to his workers, "If you do not do to suit me, you have got to leave my employ." He was able thus to get men upon whom he could rely, the "best colored labor upon the creek, and the colored labor stood by me all of the time, until I made an ass of myself by seeking and accepting public office."⁸

The young lawyer did not devote all of his time to managing a plantation. Securing an understudy to aid him at Cedar Grove, he went to Yazoo City and formed a law partnership with D. R. Barnett.⁹ The agreement between them provided that Barnett was to search out points of law and prepare the brief for the case while Williams took the brief into the courtroom and presented it. That Williams did not lose a case in which he appeared for the plaintiff is sufficient evidence of the effectiveness of this partnership, which lasted for seventeen years.¹⁰

"Kit," the younger brother, eventually became a member of the law firm. The confidence and fellowship which existed between him and John Sharp was intimate and ideal. When Kit was ready for the University of Virginia, he was given a generous allowance to meet all of his obligations there.¹¹ "There was never a division of their heritage, never a settlement of their accounts. . . . The prop-

⁷ Interview with Kit Williams, October 20, 1937.

⁸ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 2 Sess., 8063.

⁹ Interview with Williams, September 13, 1928.

¹⁰ Dickson, *Old-Fashioned Senator*, 57.

¹¹ Interview with Kit Williams, October 20, 1937.

erty of one was the property of the other, . . . not only were their lands and chattals [*sic*] in common but their bank accounts and private purses were in common."¹² Years later when the elder brother entered politics never to return to active management of the plantation, the younger took charge of the estate.¹³ Kit managed Cedar Grove until John Sharp, Jr., took charge just before the beginning of the World War.

Under the agreement with lawyer Barnett, Williams was not heavily employed during the summer months between the sessions of court. He took advantage of this lull in his legal profession to continue his political education. During three summers in his early married life, he and his family lived in a small cottage in the hills near the University of Virginia. He "paid the library fee, got books from the library, read and took a few notes."¹⁴ Although the number of books in the university library at that time was not over forty thousand volumes,¹⁵ one may conclude that this young disciple of Jeffersonianism found ample food upon which to feed his intellect. Williams was only waiting for his opportunity to enter politics; twelve years later it came.

Agrarian unrest and dissatisfaction were prevalent in the West and South almost continuously after the fall of the Confederacy. Agricultural economic maladies were given publicity through numerous organizations, some of them chiefly political, others more social. During the 1890's one of the political mouthpieces of agrarians was the People's or Populist party, which was formed from the Farmers' Alliances and other farmers' organizations of the South and West.¹⁶ In the West the Populist movement took definite form as a third party. In several campaigns in some of the

¹² "Savoyard," "John Sharp Williams," in *Jackson Daily News*, September 3, 1907.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Interview with Williams, September 13, 1928.

¹⁵ Bruce, *History of the University of Virginia*, IV, 53.

¹⁶ See Frederick E. Haynes, *Third Party Movements Since the Civil War* (Iowa City, 1916), 221-35, for a good summary of the origins of the Populist party.

southern states both Populists and Democrats nominated candidates and campaigned for election. Often, Republicans united with Populists who bolted the Democratic party. In 1896, however, there was a general fusion of Democrats and Populists. Among other things the leaders of the Populist movement desired to have the Federal government establish warehouses at various points throughout the farming sections. The farmer could then take his grain and cotton to a warehouse and receive a receipt on which he could borrow money from the government up to 80 per cent of the market value of the produce, at a rate of interest of only 2 per cent.¹⁷

This "subtreasury system" acquired some popularity in the South and new West, but many members of the Northwestern Farmers' Alliance bitterly denounced it. The Northwestern Alliance, with a few exceptions, remained aloof from the Populist movement which almost engulfed the South and West. The basis of this aloofness was in economic conditions which arose during the period and tended to antagonize instead of unify the Alliances of the Northwest with those of the South. The southern farmer organized to fight the "bagging trust" or "jute trust," while the northwestern farmer was interested in destroying the "bindertwine trust." An example of the opposition between the interests of farmers in the South and those of the Northwest was found in the introduction of oleomargarine, compound lard, and other vegetable shortenings. The South favored these products because they boosted the price of cotton seed; whereas the Northwest staunchly opposed them, as they depressed the price of dairy products, cattle, and hogs.¹⁸

¹⁷ The subtreasury plan is presented in a scholarly fashion in John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt* (Minneapolis, 1931), 186 ff. Also see *id.*, "The Subtreasury: A Forgotten Plan for the Relief of Agriculture," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (Cedar Rapids), XV (1928-1929), 355-73.

¹⁸ Herman C. Nixon, "The Cleavage within the Farmers' Alliance Movement," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XV (1928-1929), 22-23.

It was in the midst of such political and economic unrest that John Sharp Williams, in the late spring of 1890, announced himself a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the Fifth Congressional District, which comprised twelve counties located chiefly in the central part of the state—Attala, Clarke, Holmes, Jasper, Lauderdale, Leake, Neshoba, Newton, Scott, Smith, Wayne, and Yazoo.¹⁹ Wash D. Gibbs, also of Yazoo County, was a rival candidate for the Democratic nomination. Gibbs was an older man and had been in politics for a number of years, while Williams was entirely inexperienced. Between these two citizens, however, a mutual agreement was reached whereby the loser in their own county was to withdraw from the race.²⁰

Mississippi has always had a large majority of its population in rural communities. In 1890, of the 462,739 persons above ten years of age employed in gainful occupations, 360,049 were engaged in agriculture.²¹ Thus, any office seeker in Mississippi must win the friendship of the rural voter to be elected to any office of a political unit larger than a municipality. "Country people," according to Harris Dickson, "usually express their feeling rather than political opinions when they cast a ballot."²²

From May to August of 1890 Williams saw most of Yazoo County's roads from the seat of a two-horse buggy. He was not alone on these political jaunts, for a Negro man was engaged to drive and care for the team. Both Gibbs and Williams sometimes appeared and spoke at the same meeting, but no joint debates were arranged by the itinerants. According to the custom of the day, many of the political meetings were held in schoolhouses—a practice still followed in Mississippi rural communities.

Tuesday, August 5, 1890, was the day set in Yazoo County

¹⁹ See *Official Congressional Directory*, 1893-1927.

²⁰ Interview with Williams, December 26, 1931.

²¹ See *Compendium of the Eleventh Census; 1890* (Washington, 1892-1897), III, 416.

²² Dickson, *Old-Fashioned Senator*, 77.

for the selection of delegates to the district convention. Practical political knowledge and organization were victorious over energy and inexperience. Of the 150 delegates allotted to Yazoo County in the Democratic District Convention, Gibbs secured 76, a majority of 2. Thereupon Williams withdrew from the race and adopted a laissez-faire policy in keeping with his agreement. The convention, which met two weeks later at Forest in Scott County, nominated Joseph H. Beeman, an outstanding member of the Farmers' Alliance of Mississippi, and he was elected in November.²³

The late spring of 1892 found both Williams and Gibbs engaged in a second campaign for Yazoo County's delegation to the Democratic District Convention. The county canvass approximated the 1890 campaign, except that Williams drove his own team. "True democracy demanded that he jerk the reins himself, and curry his own horse."²⁴ The county election of delegates, held on August 9, revealed that Williams had a better organization than in 1890, for he received 516 popular votes, a majority of 33 over Gibbs. Of the 150 delegates, 79 were pledged to him.²⁵ Gibbs contended for a prorata delegation to the convention, but Williams claimed the entire county delegation, and the ultimate outcome was as he wished.²⁶

During the county canvass of 1892 it was necessary for Williams to leave his campaign largely in the hands of friends as he was becoming an active member of the Democratic party in Mississippi. He represented the Fifth District in the state Democratic convention, which met in Jackson on June 1, and served on its Committee on Resolutions. The convention appointed Williams and W. N. King of Lauderdale County delegates to the national convention that met at Chicago on June 21.²⁷ In Chicago the aspiring

²³ Interview with Williams, December 26, 1931.

²⁴ Dickson, *Old-Fashioned Senator*, 83.

²⁵ Jackson *State Ledger*, August 12, 1892.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, June 10, 1892.

young politician met and mingled with many of the Democratic leaders throughout the nation and observed with inquisitive interest the actual functioning of a national party convention.

Williams knew that the contest in the district convention was going to be a stubborn fight, so he decided to enter the convention as a delegate and take charge of his forces personally.²⁸ The convention met at Kosciusko, the county seat of Attala County, on August 19,²⁹ and organized by electing as chairman Jud Russell of Meridian, a former member and speaker of the Mississippi House.³⁰ Several favorite sons of various counties were presented to the convention. Among them were Colonel Chapman L. Anderson of Attala County, a former congressman; Colonel J. G. Hamilton, a citizen of Durant in Holmes County; and Williams.

The main struggle in the convention was between the Farmers' Alliance faction led by Beeman and the regular Democratic faction among whom Williams was one of the promising young members, although the leader was probably Colonel Anderson. It seemed that neither of these factions was going to triumph. The occasion was ripe for a "dark horse," or an independent. A few minutes before ten o'clock on Saturday night the three hundred and forty-fourth ballot was concluded without nomination. Suddenly, a dramatic one-sentence speech swept the convention into action to nominate John Sharp Williams. Wiley Sanders, a delegate to this convention, wrote years later that it happened this way: "Colonel S. L. Dodd, of Kosciusko rose and shouted in a dramatic manner, 'Nominate the lion-hearted John Sharp Williams of Yazoo County and there will be no doubt.' This utterance swept the convention like a storm and Williams was nominated on the next . . . ballot." ³¹ As the delegates were returning to their homes

²⁸ Interview with Williams, December 26, 1931.

²⁹ *Jackson State Ledger*, August 17, 1892.

³⁰ Wiley Sanders to author, February 19, 1932, in possession of author.

³¹ *Ibid.*

the next morning, the *Jackson Daily Clarion* carried the news that Williams was nominated "amid great enthusiasm" and that his speech of acceptance was "elegant and grand."³²

The people of Yazoo City, aided by Williams' friends throughout the county, held a rally in honor of their fellow townsman. Williams fittingly made his first campaign speech in his home town in the same courthouse where he had argued and won many law cases during his fourteen years of practice. This time the courthouse was packed. He spoke for more than an hour and was often enthusiastically cheered.³³

Williams had been a member of the Farmers' Alliance when a candidate in Yazoo County in 1890, and during that short campaign he availed himself of the opportunity to speak of the utter unsoundness and undesirability of the subtreasury system. When a number of dissatisfied political elements formed the Populist party after the Ocala, Florida, convention of December, 1890, a large number of Farmers' Alliance men in the South failed to align themselves with the new party. Williams excused his action in withdrawing from the fold on the ground that he could not endorse the Ocala platform.³⁴ The Ocala convention looked with favor upon the subtreasury system and government ownership of railroads, neither of which was acceptable to Williams.³⁵ The third-party movement, according to a Mississippi paper, was "nothing more nor less than an attempt to disrupt the solid South and again open the way for Republican control and force bills that are ready prepared to be clapped upon us."³⁶ In all probability the fear of Republican control of the South and through this party, Negro control,

³² *Jackson Daily Clarion*, August 21, 1892.

³³ *Ibid.*, August 24, 1892.

³⁴ *Jackson State Ledger*, August 2, 1892; interview with Williams, December 26, 1931.

³⁵ For the "Ocala Demands," December, 1890, see the *Proceedings of the Supreme Council of the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union*, 1890, pp. 32-33, quoted in Hicks, *Populist Revolt*, Appendix B.

³⁶ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, July 22, 1892.

carried much weight with Williams in his deciding to remain in the Democratic party.³⁷

The Populist party had a well-disciplined organization in the Fifth Congressional District. W. P. Ratliff, a Methodist minister of Attala County, was the successful candidate for the Populist nomination.³⁸ Soon after he received the nomination a series of joint debates were arranged with Williams. Ratliff's list of places were all Populist strongholds, a fact which Williams said pleased him because Ratliff wanted the applause and he wanted to get before the people.³⁹

The platform of this party, the subtreasury system, Williams opposed as unpractical and contrary to the best fundamentals of governmental procedure. He dealt mainly with three issues: the tariff, the currency, and rural free delivery. He would have a tariff for revenue only, free and unlimited coinage of silver, and free delivery of mail to all rural communities safely accessible to transportation. Rural delivery was new to Mississippi in 1892, and many of Williams' friends believed he was "just throwing out 'something better' than the 'subtreasury' " plan in an effort to gain votes at the expense of his Populist opponent.⁴⁰

The joint debates progressed for some time and gave indication of continuing until the election. In the latter part of October in one of these debates, Williams spoke first and proceeded to tell all of Ratliff's jokes. The Populist had no comeback during the debate, but afterward he told Williams that he regarded it as a "lick below the belt."⁴¹ Ratliff refused any further joint debates, and Williams arranged his own itinerary for the rest of the campaign.⁴²

³⁷ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 1 Sess., 2427.

³⁸ Cecil Johnson, "The Agrarian Crusade with Special Reference to Mississippi" (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1924), presents a good treatment of this topic.

³⁹ Interview with Williams, October 27, 1928.

⁴⁰ *Cong. Record*, 57 Cong., 1 Sess., 2375.

⁴¹ Interview with Williams, October 27, 1928.

⁴² *Jackson Daily Clarion*, November 1, 1892.

In September, James B. Weaver, the nominee of the Populist party for President, was in full swing in his southern campaigning. He boasted that he counted his audiences in the West "not by the thousands but by the acres." His messages were sweeping the prairies like a fire. When he spoke at Meridian, Mississippi, on September 10, Williams was in his large audience. The Democratic candidate for Congress challenged some of the Populist's statements and requested a joint debate. It "was refused on the ground that Weaver, a candidate for the Presidency, could not let himself down to an argument with a candidate for so small a position as Representative."⁴³ After Weaver had concluded his speech, John D. McInnis, Jud Russell, and other friends of Williams in a spirit of fun called on him for a speech. They thought he would be "knocked off his feet," but they were badly disappointed. He was not in the least embarrassed and made an extemporaneous speech which completely captivated his audience.⁴⁴ The *Natchez Daily Democrat* assured Williams that he could console himself with the fact he would soon be a member of Congress while Weaver would soon be at home. Weaver's campaign in the Lower South was cut short in Macon, Georgia, by a boy who attacked him with rotten eggs.⁴⁵

The returns of the election, which was held on November 8, showed that in the Fifth Congressional District, Williams received 7,541 votes while Ratliff received only 3,028, a majority of 4,513 for Williams.⁴⁶

This newly elected Democratic member of the House

⁴³ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, September 13, 1892.

⁴⁴ Williams to Miss Lucile Banks, sometime after Williams retired. Letter undated, in possession of Miss Banks. Miss Banks and her father were living in Meridian at the time and were present on the occasion of the speech. Her father reported that "Williams made the best extemporaneous speech he ever listened to." Miss Banks to author, October 6, 1938, in possession of author.

⁴⁵ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, September 27, 1892.

⁴⁶ *Tribune Almanac and Political Register*, 1893 (New York, 1894), 285.

soon went to Washington "to watch the performance of that body" in the last session of the Fifty-second Congress.⁴⁷ Here he renewed acquaintances that he had made at the national convention six months earlier and found new friends. His greatest benefit was in gaining some knowledge of the routine of the House of Representatives and in becoming somewhat accustomed to the environment.

⁴⁷ *Cong. Record*, 59 Cong., 1 Sess., 3420.

Chapter IV

THE BATTLE FOR THE AGRARIAN MASSES UNDER CLEVELAND

IN 1890 the Baring Brothers, international bankers of London, failed. Since they had held an important position in industry and commerce, their failure indicated the unsoundness that had invaded these fields of activity. Fortunately, because her agricultural crops in 1891 were bountiful, the United States achieved a favorable balance of trade during that year. In 1892 prices sagged, production decreased, and an unfavorable balance of trade resulted. Hence, the United States as a debtor nation had to export gold to meet its international obligations. The Harrison Administration, by issuing bonds to meet the necessary expenses, was able to pass its closing hours without feeling the full force of the dawning depression. The election returns of November, 1892, revealed that after March 4, 1893, the Democrats would be in a position to control the national government for the first time in many years. Cleveland received from Harrison as a farewell gift an embryonic panic, which, when nurtured by the Democrats, matured, mushroom-like, overnight. Neither the Democrats nor the Republicans had made a clear-cut expression of their views on currency during the campaign of 1892. But on June 30, 1893, the press throughout the country carried a summons from the President for Congress to convene in special session on August 7 to repeal the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890.

The significance of these dates, June 30 and August 7, was

not publicly known at that time. Just a few days before the former date, Cleveland had consented to urgent advice for an operation. Physicians had told the President that August 7 was the earliest date on which he would be able to resume executive duties. All agreed that secrecy must enshroud the President's illness and operation. He traveled quietly from Washington to New York and there, accompanied by Secretary of War Daniel S. Lamont, went aboard Commodore Benedict's yacht, the *Oneida*. As the ship crept at half speed up the coast toward the President's summer home near Buzzard's Bay, several doctors performed the delicate and dangerous dental operation.¹ Cleveland was able to return to Washington on August 6 for the opening of the first Congressional session of his second term in the White House.

Among the debutants in the Fifty-third Congress was a slender man five feet, nine and one-half inches in height, head medium for his body and topped with a heavy crop of dark brown hair. His deep-set blue eyes looked out beneath thick, shaggy brows. These penetrating eyes were usually aided by a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles. A straight, middle-sized nose protruded above a brown, untrimmed mustache. This new member was practically deaf in his right ear. He was clad in plain clothes which had been adjusted with indifferent hands.² Just eight days before, he had celebrated his thirty-ninth birthday by remaining at his ancestral plantation home with his wife and children. This man was the new Representative from the Fifth Congressional District of Mississippi, John Sharp Williams.

The President in his message to the extra session "earnestly recommended" speedy legislation to repeal the silver purchase clause of the Sherman silver law of 1890. The

¹ William W. Keen, *The Surgical Operations on President Cleveland in 1893* (Philadelphia, 1917), 38.

² This description has been drawn from conversations, photographs, and pen portraits.

New York *Times*, somewhat optimistically perhaps, declared that the message "was received throughout the country as the harbinger of better times."³ House Bill No. I, introduced by the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, William L. Wilson of West Virginia, provided for the repeal of the purchasing clause of the Sherman Silver Act of 1890.⁴

The leader of the silver forces in the House, Richard P. Bland of Missouri, introduced resolutions which provided for the consideration of the Wilson bill for fourteen days, and for roll calls on amendments for the coinage of silver in the ratio of 16 to 1, 17 to 1, 18 to 1, 19 to 1, and 20 to 1, respectively. In case of an adverse decision, a vote was to be taken on the restoration of the policy of the Bland-Allison Act of 1878. All of these amendments were to be voted on before the roll call on the passage of the Wilson bill.⁵

Addressing the House for the first time on August 22, 1893, Williams stated that he felt like rising in his seat simply to express his sincere thanks to the Speaker (Charles F. Crisp of Georgia) for the magnificent opportunity that had been given him "as sixth upon the night list, to speak to a lot of pages and empty benches." Upon second thought, however, he realized it was his duty to voice "the wishes of the great agricultural Democracy," a part of which he had been elected to serve.⁶

Williams believed in the free coinage of silver "from honest convictions"; in fact, this issue constituted one of the main planks of his pre-election platform. The New York *Recorder* had voiced what Williams declared to be his convictions on the silver issue a few days earlier when it said: "To persist in total elimination of silver from our currency is madness. The lead of the gold monometallists

³ New York *Times*, August 9, 1893.

⁴ Cong. *Record*, 53 Cong., 1 Sess., 241.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 242-43.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 654.

has been followed far enough. It is time to call a halt, and demand that silver shall be put back in the place it held for eighty years, from the formation of the Government down to 1873, and be made again one of the two main pillars of the American system of currency and coinage.”⁷

The condition confronting the country seemed to be, according to Williams, twofold: namely, a scarcity of money in actual use, and a constantly widening divergence between gold and silver.⁸ Members were proposing to remedy these conditions by making money scarcer and by making the divergence between the two metals greater through increasing the demand for gold, whose price was too high, and through lessening the demand for silver, whose price was too low.⁹

Silver was a sectional problem of many years' standing. The farmer and debtor classes of the South and West were arrayed against the banking and creditor classes of the North and East. The usual agrarian plea for more money was expounded by the new member from Mississippi. “Coinage is convenient if all can have access to it, if government will confine itself to its legitimate functions, which are to declare the weight, the fineness, the ratio, and the device. But when Government goes further and attempts to restrict the supply of coin, it takes from money its most desirable quality and attribute—its elasticity; and moreover depreciates the intrinsic value of the bullion whose coinage is restricted.”¹⁰

Williams did not take any stock in the argument that a conspiracy had been formed against silver. He accepted as honest convictions the opinions of others whom he thought to be as honest as he and whom he knew to be far more intelligent. There were those, said Williams, who sincerely believed “with all their souls that if this country adopts free

⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 655.

⁸ See *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1921* (Washington, 1922), for the correctness of this analysis.

⁹ *Cong. Record*, 53 Cong., 1 Sess., 664.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

coinage of silver it will sink to a monometallic silver basis." ¹¹ He did not believe that bimetallism would bring about silver monometallism. If the condition arose, however, where there was no other alternative than to accept gold monometallism, which would rob the debtor class, he would "ask heaven's forgiveness for the deed" and rob the richer class "so help me God." ¹² The natural trend of bankers was toward better, dearer money—"a money which will buy more when they get it back than it would have bought when they lent it out." Williams contended that a combination had been formed by a group of people from a "purely selfish business standpoint" for their own interests. ¹³

Williams defined money as "an instrument used in the exchange of services or commodities, which is at one and the same time a measure of values and an equivalent of values." ¹⁴ Those who did not hold extreme theories accepted this definition of money in full. The fiat money element disregarded the "equivalency attribute." To be right, money must be something "beyond the control of politicians," "a something which God has *naturally fitted* to act as money." It must be found in the bosom of mother earth "in limited amount and with tolerable constancy." Furthermore, it must "grow in production *pari passu* with the growth of population . . . and all of the other instrumentalities of civilization." On the other extreme, declared Williams, the gold monometallists lost sight of the "measure of value" feature. Money must be "sufficient in volume to answer the purpose of a measure, . . . not too precious, but which can be divided and brought down, so that it will measure the smallest commodity." ¹⁵

The question had often been asked whether gold and silver were precious metals because they were money or money because they were precious metals. Williams an-

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 656. In other words, Gresham's law would not be invoked.

¹² *Ibid.*, 658.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 656.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 658.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

swered convincingly: "They became money because they were rare and precious, and they became still more precious because of the increased demand for them in use as money." These metals were money before man made laws; and if all laws were revoked, they would still remain money but would pass "by weight and assay instead of by tale." To use these two metals as money, Williams contended, was only natural. The silver men only wanted the limitations removed from silver and were asking Congress to "treat the two natural money metals alike."¹⁶

The House remained in session that night forty minutes later than the usual eleven o'clock, listening to the maiden speech of this newcomer from the Lower South.¹⁷

The next day, August 23, the *New York Sun* gave a brief summary of Williams' speech. Charles Tracey, a Democrat of New York who believed in "sound money," had interrupted Williams to assert that the majority of the Democrats would vote for the repeal of the purchasing clause of the Sherman Silver Act. Williams quickly retorted: "Never, sir, while the world holds"; but even if his party members voted as Tracey predicted, they would not be carrying out the wishes of the majority of the Democrats.¹⁸

Those who had predicted that there would be little or no interest manifested in the House were astonished to witness large audiences in the galleries. Not only was attendance large, but attention was intense.¹⁹ Years later a reporter recalled the effect of the maiden speech of John Sharp Williams upon him. It was the first time this member of the press had noticed the Congressman. Upon seeing the gentleman from Mississippi, he mentally ejaculated, "I am not going to listen to a speech from any such insignificant fellow

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 665.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 656. Quoted in the *New York Sun*, August 23, 1893. Harris Dickson stated erroneously in his *Old-Fashioned Senator*, 108, that this paper "carried two columns of comment on the ability, the soundness and the fluency of John Sharp Williams."

¹⁹ *New York Times*, August 23, 1893.

as that. How the devil did he get here? I'll bet he had no opposition.' " The reporter started to leave, but, being some distance from the door he had opportunity to hear several sentences of the newcomer's before he reached it. He turned and observed that the members of Congress present were listening closely to the speech. The doorkeeper, a personal friend, yielded his seat. The reporter listened to the entire speech and said in effect to a newspaper friend whom he met in the corridor, " 'there is a little fellow from Mississippi down there who is going to prove the biggest man of them all.' " Because neither of them knew the Mississippian's name, they returned to the press gallery to ascertain his identity.²⁰

The roll calls were held according to the Bland resolution. It proved necessary to vote on all of the propositions.²¹ The vote on the passage of the Wilson bill was 239 to 108 in favor of repeal. Party lines were disregarded on these roll calls as in the preceding debates, thus revealing the sectional nature of the contest. The enormous majority for repeal left the silver men in the House without hope, though some of them retained their sense of humor. "Private" John Allen of Mississippi hailed Josiah Patterson of Tennessee: " 'See here, Patterson, I am told that you are voting with Tom Reed. Seems to me you are following him around now a day!' " Patterson looked at Allen a moment and replied, " 'Let's see, Allen, this bill for free coinage was beaten by a vote of 226, and Tom Reed's was one of the 226,

²⁰ "Savoyard," "John Sharp Williams," in *Jackson Daily News*, April 29, 1917.

²¹ *Cong. Record*, 53 Cong., 1 Sess., 1004-1008. The votes were as follows:

Amendment or bill	Yeas	Nays	Majority
Free coinage of silver 16 to 1	125	226	101
" " " " 17 to 1	101	241	140
" " " " 18 to 1	103	240	137
" " " " 19 to 1	104	238	134
" " " " 20 to 1	122	222	100
Restoration of Bland-Allison Act	136	213	77
Passage of Wilson Bill	239	108	131

as was mine. Free coinage got 125 votes including that of the colored man from South Carolina, and that of the gentleman from Tupelo.' " ²²

In the Senate, Daniel W. Voorhees of Indiana, chairman of the Finance Committee, reported a bill on Friday, August 18, similar to the Wilson bill in the House.²³ Voorhees began the debate in the Senate with a well-received speech the same day, August 22, on which Williams made his initial appearance before the House. Despite the chaotic economic conditions in the country, the debate in the Senate continued for weeks. There was some talk of a minority of Democratic Senators aligning themselves with a Republican minority to gain a majority over those supporting the President. These tactics laid up a store of parliamentary difficulties for the Democratic party. The press noted that similar action could be employed when the tariff and other issues would come up later in the Administration.²⁴

More than two months passed, and still the Senate had not brought the currency legislation to a vote. The delay of the Senate was no credit to that body.²⁵ Midnight sessions were invoked in an endeavor to stifle the debate of the silver Senators from the West. Curious multitudes, hoping for senatorial action, filled the galleries, only to witness prolonged speeches.²⁶ William V. Allen, a Populist from Nebraska, spoke fourteen hours against the repealing measure.²⁷ A Republican, John P. Jones of Nevada, made a speech which filled one hundred pages of the *Record*, trying to convert the Senators to a belief in free silver.²⁸ The Senate did not formally adjourn from Tuesday morning, October 17, until Monday night, October 30. The spectacle in the Senate chamber was the "biggest show in America." ²⁹ It

²² *New York Times*, September 28, 1893.

²³ *Cong. Record*, 53 Cong., 1 Sess., 445.

²⁴ *New York Times*, September 28, 1893.

²⁵ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, September 28, 1893.

²⁶ *New York Times*, October 12, 1893.

²⁷ *Cong. Record*, 53 Cong., 1 Sess., 2396.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Appendix, 606-705.

²⁹ *New York Times*, October 13, 1893.

seemed as if debate were going to continue *ad infinitum*; but as the daylight surrounding the Capitol faded into darkness on the evening of October 30, the silver warriors from the South and West reluctantly surrendered by a vote of 45 to 32 to the "gold bugs" of the North and East on the discontinuance of the purchase of silver.³⁰ The *Nation* reported that "the prolonged contest over silver has ended" and accurately predicted that "unfortunately this will not be the last of silver in American politics."³¹

Much rejoicing was evident among the monometallists as the President affixed his signature to the unconditional repeal of the Sherman purchase clause. No longer was the Treasury forced to buy specified quantities of silver. Having performed the only task for which it was called, Congress adjourned on November 3, with seriousness in the Senate and gaiety in the House.³²

With a month's vacation in store Williams hurried to Mississippi. The crops at Cedar Grove Plantation were being harvested. The interlude passed rapidly, with the time divided between the plantation and the law office.³³

In his message of the preceding August, Cleveland had urged a laissez-faire policy for the tariff problem until the repeal of the silver clause, a request which Congress had willingly obeyed. The Democratic platform of 1892 had denounced the McKinley Tariff Act "as the culminating atrocity of class legislation" and had promised its repeal.³⁴ Cleveland in his annual message of December 4, 1893, said of tariff reform: "Nothing so important claims our attention." "Nothing should intervene to distract our attention

³⁰ *Cong. Record*, 53 Cong., 1 Sess., 2958.

³¹ *Nation* (New York), LVII (November 2, 1893), 322.

³² *New York Times*, November 2, 4, 1893.

³³ The firm of Barnett and Williams a few years earlier had been increased by the addition of Kit Williams.

³⁴ *The Campaign Text Book of the Democratic Party for the Presidential Election of 1892* (New York, 1892), 6.

or disturb our effort until this reform is accomplished by wise and careful legislation.”³⁵ Businessmen urged the enactment of tariff legislation as speedily as possible. One businessman said that the tariff was “a question purely of business and not of politics,”³⁶ and others echoed the sentiment.

The major tariff bill of the House Ways and Means Committee was presented by its chairman, William L. Wilson, on December 19. This bill endorsed the campaign pledges and the tone of the President’s annual message. “A very impressive document,” declared the British-born Edwin L. Godkin; a “tariff-tinkering bill,” averred Thomas B. Reed, the Maine Republican Congressman.³⁷

Democratic opposition to the bill as reported soon became evident in the House. This opposition was strong enough, with the aid of the Republican members, to hold up consideration of the measure until January. A Democratic caucus, which met on the night of January 5, attempted to heal the controversy over the Wilson bill. Speaker Crisp pleaded for concerted action. The opponents were given complete assurance that discussion of any and all phases of the tariff bill would be permitted and that a vote upon the acceptability of any phase of the measure would be granted. This seemed—but only seemed—to satisfy the recalcitrant Democratic members.³⁸ On January 8 the majority asserted its right to control the business of the House.

Wilson opened the debate. The reception of the speech indicated that the Democrats were determined “to take hold of the revenue bill with interest [and] carry it through the House with all reasonable dispatch.”³⁹ This spirit of optimism and determination was encouraging and gratifying to the masses of the people throughout the country.

³⁵ James D. Richardson (ed.), *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902* (Washington, 1897-1905), IX, 458-59.

³⁶ *New York Times*, December 2, 1893.

³⁷ *Nation*, LVII (December 28, 1893), 480.

³⁸ *New York Times*, January 6, 1894.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, January 9, 1894.

On January 24, at a meeting of the Ways and Means Committee, a revenue bill in the nature of an income tax was presented. By no means did this bill have the entire approval of the committee, if the reported margin of its acceptance—by a vote of nine to seven—is true.⁴⁰

Other bills seeking to raise money were introduced on the floor of the House. The Wilson bill would be really endangered if all the opposition could be united. There were those who opposed the income tax, some who opposed duty-free raw materials, and many Republicans who opposed the bill for purely political reasons. In the Democratic caucus the opposition to the income tax alone was reported as seventy-one.⁴¹ The Republican vote in the House was 127. Obviously, if the Democratic opponents of the income tax should vote with the Republican minority, passage of the bill would be impossible.

In an atmosphere of doubtful hopefulness, Williams made his first extended remarks on the tariff question at an evening session on January 29, 1894. That taxes should be derived as much as possible from luxuries was axiomatic to the Representative from Mississippi. "Every tax upon the necessities of life is a tax which tends towards legislating men into consumption, pneumonia, and disease, moral and mental," declared Williams.⁴²

To the Republican plea that a protective tariff produced higher wages, the speaker, "for the sake of the argument," agreed. He then stated that "our statistics show that 5 per cent of the population of the United States are engaged in the protected industries." This small minority "who threaten and demand" were to be favored against the "95 per cent of the people of America, who mildly expostulate and suggest." Again he asserted: ". . . you can legislate money into the pockets of a particular individual or a particular class . . . but in order to do that you must legislate

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, January 25, 1894.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, January 27, 1894.

⁴² *Cong. Record*, 53 Cong., 2 Sess., 1605.

it out of the pocket of some other individual or . . . class . . . [and] the men robbed are the farmers, the farm laborers, and all the community except those engaged in protected industries." ⁴³

England, for many years a devotee of free trade, had witnessed a gradual rise in her wage scale. To this increase of wages the free traders laid a claim. In the United States wages had been steadily increasing for a number of years. For this condition the protectionists hoped to receive credit. Williams firmly believed the farm and not the factory to be the basis of our national welfare: "Wages depend, like other things," he declared, "upon the demand and supply of labor, and demand and supply of labor depend in the long run upon the remuneration of agriculture." ⁴⁴

The home market plea Williams declared to be "infinite bosh," adding that "The price of my cotton is regulated by the amount of cotton in all the world . . . and by the number of people in all the world . . . who want cotton goods and have the money to pay for them. The place of their residence is not of the slightest importance." ⁴⁵ Thus again, he claimed that the economic law of supply and demand was the potent factor.

Income tax bills introduced earlier ⁴⁶ were to be only temporary measures to care for some immediate demands that must be met by the Treasury. To ensure the success of the tariff measure in meeting the financial needs of the government, an income tax was also attached to the Wilson tariff bill on February 1. Taking the form of an internal revenue amendment, it provided for a tax of 2 per cent upon all incomes in excess of \$4,000 per year. ⁴⁷ With a few exceptions the vote on this amendment, 182 to 48, had the support of Southerners and Westerners regardless of party affiliations. ⁴⁸

The income tax was not, Williams argued, a new type

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1620.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Index, 226.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1619.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1620.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1620.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1795-96.

of legislation as many were saying, but had been resorted to by many democracies "since the days of Solon in ancient Athens . . . as the most equal of all taxes."⁴⁹ He gave examples of its use in modern countries and claimed that history tended to show that the popularity of income and inheritance taxes increased with self-government.⁵⁰

Many were contending that the income tax was class legislation directed against the rich and was in reality a tax on superior thrift and ability. Williams was not sure about this view: "Perhaps it is sometimes superior opportunity, superior environment, superior cold heartedness, better luck." While admitting that, as a rule, a man's prosperity depended "upon his thrift, on his knowledge, his industry, his temperance as well as his opportunity," the speaker expressed as his personal view, that, "I am thankful that it is my condition, and I am not disposed to quarrel because somebody else has not the amount exempt under this [income tax] bill. That all men ought to pay to the State in proportion to their abilities is, I take it, simply infusing in our system of taxation some of the spirit of Democracy and of Christianity."⁵¹

The tariff and the income tax were contrasted in such a way as to leave no doubt in the minds of the House which system Williams preferred as a source of governmental income. The customs duties then cost 3 per cent to collect, while the income tax cost only 2 per cent.⁵² In crises, when revenue was most needed, the least amount was secured from the tariff. Because of uncertainty as to the amount of income, a tariff policy led to a system "of not having any budget . . . a system of fitting expenditures to the amount of money you have in the Treasury, instead of first settling

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1606. The income tax referred to in ancient Athens was a law pertaining to the equipment of an army, by which the citizens of Athens were divided into classes according to their wealth. Each class provided its military equipment according to its means.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1617.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1621.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 1618, quoting Richard T. Ely, *Taxation in American States and Cities* (New York, 1888), 90-91.

what amount of money is needed for the economical administration of the Government and subsequently proceeding to collect that amount of money and that amount only from the people." Income taxes, argued Williams, could be increased or decreased with a minimum disturbance to business.⁵³

The climax of the six weeks of debating on the Wilson bill was reached on Thursday, February 1, the day of its passage in the House. The galleries and the floor of the House were filled to overflowing. Thomas Reed of Maine, former Speaker and acknowledged leader of the Republicans in the House, was recognized.⁵⁴ He gave evidence to show that the trend during the past half century had been, except in England, away from free trade toward protectionism. Claiming that the question of wages was to him the main point, Reed as a staunch protectionist pointed with pride to the gradual rise of wages in our country.⁵⁵

The moment was tense when Speaker Crisp took the floor immediately after Reed resumed his seat. The bitter rivalry of these two men had already claimed national recognition. The Democratic purpose as stated by Crisp was to reduce the tariff and give industry untaxed raw materials: the policy would cheapen production, increase consumption, and enlarge business.⁵⁶

The vote taken a short while after the conclusion of the Speaker's remarks on the passage of the Wilson bill showed 204 yeas and 140 nays. "Amid a storm of applause Bryan, John Sharp Williams, and others carried . . . [Wilson] from the scene on their shoulders. It was the crowning moment of Wilson's Congressional career." ⁵⁷ Members of the

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1618. Williams lamented the fact that the United States government had no budget.

⁵⁴ Samuel W. McCall, *The Life of Thomas Brackett Reed* (New York, 1914), 197-210, writes very complementarily of Reed's speech against the Wilson-Gorman bill.

⁵⁵ *Cong. Record*, 53 Cong., 2 Sess., 1784.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1791.

⁵⁷ Allan Nevins, *Grover Cleveland; A Study in Courage* (New York, 1932), 567.

House voted chiefly along party lines. The exceptions were the Louisiana Representatives, who voted against the measure because sugar had been placed on the free list. Other scattered Democrats from the North who were opposed to the income tax stood with the Republican minority.

The Finance Committee of the Senate delayed bringing forth the Wilson bill until March 20 and then reported it loaded with amendments which were due chiefly to the powerful influence of Arthur P. Gorman and Calvin S. Brice, Senators from Maryland and Ohio, respectively. Requests of many Senators that special-interest protections be placed on the duty lists were granted. Free sugar, for example, was returned to the dutiable list with a rating of 40 per cent ad valorem to appease Senators Newton C. Blanchard and Donelson Caffery of Louisiana. The dutiable list was increased by the addition of iron ore and coal to secure the votes of Democratic Senators from Maryland, West Virginia, and Alabama.⁵⁸

Senator James K. Jones of Arkansas, as a result of personal interviews with Democratic Senators, reported 428 new amendments on May 7.⁵⁹ Two hundred and six other amendments found their way into the bill before it passed the Senate.⁶⁰ Many of the ad valorem duties of the House measure were replaced by specific duties. In some cases a specific duty was laid in addition to the ad valorem duty. The Democrats, who had reached an agreement in caucus, voted almost to a man for the numerous amendments.

At times during the debate the Democratic majority in the Senate was unable to muster a quorum. Poker-bluff tactics were engaged in by the Republican minority under the leadership of Nelson W. Aldrich. Secretary John G. Carlisle, who throughout Cleveland's Administration was a

⁵⁸ Edward Stanwood, *American Tariff Controversies in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1903), II, 327-28.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 334; *Cong. Record*, 53 Cong., 2 Sess., 4442.

⁶⁰ *Cong. Record*, 53 Cong., 2 Sess., 7191; Stanwood, *American Tariff Controversies*, II, 340.

most efficient financial aide, stated in an interview that the changes were necessary in order to present a united Democratic vote in the Senate.⁶¹ Many of the Democratic Senators expressed dissatisfaction with the measure as it was being shaped, but most of them recognized "the absolute necessity of passing a tariff bill of some kind."⁶²

The transformed Wilson bill passed the Senate on July 5 by practically a party vote—39 to 34.⁶³ This measure, because of the fundamental changes by which it lost most of its reform nature, now became known as the Wilson-Gorman bill. After the House had refused to accept the numerous Senate amendments, a conference committee was named.⁶⁴ The conferences produced unusual results: the House of Representatives appointees accepted *in toto* the several hundred amendments of the Senate.

The House then accepted this conference report by a vote of 182 to 106. Although Cleveland's wishes,⁶⁵ as expressed in a public letter to Chairman Wilson, had been known for several days, they were disregarded by the House in this vote. The bill fell far short of the reforms that the Democrats had long hoped to see enacted. Many were led to believe that the President would sign the bill in an endeavor to heal the rapidly growing schism within the party. Apparently, the earnest desire among many of the Democrats in the House to promote harmony in the ranks outweighed presidential influence and customary conference procedure. Also, it must not be forgotten that the entire membership of the House was up for re-election within a few weeks, whereas only a third of the Senate was so concerned.

John Sharp Williams was recorded among the majority

⁶¹ *New York Times*, April 30, 1894.

⁶² *Ibid.*, May 9, 1894.

⁶³ *Cong. Record*, 53 Cong., 2 Sess., 7136.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ For an able presentation of Cleveland's part in the Wilson-Gorman bill, see Robert M. McElroy, *Grover Cleveland, the Man and the Statesman* (New York, 1923), II, 107-37.

on the roll call for the final passage of the bill.⁶⁶ He later explained why he aided its passage, although several provisions certainly violated his principles: "I rejoiced in the passage of the Wilson-Gorman bill. Not because the tariff features of it were Democratic—for, on the contrary, they were protective—but because the act contained the income tax, and I regarded the passage of the income tax in time of peace as the first step on the high road toward a system of raising revenue for the Government from the net accumulations of wealth rather than from the backs and bellies of the people."⁶⁷ Like nearly all other Democrats in the House he failed to sustain the President, who had courageously brought about the war on the Republican tariff policy. The House reasoned incorrectly when it anticipated President Cleveland's signature on the Wilson-Gorman bill, for he permitted it to become a law on August 28 without his signature—a silent disapproval.

Republican newspapers held that the measure was a Democratic law for which the Democrats must accept responsibility, and they appealed to the country to return to the schedule of the McKinley Act. Democratic papers argued that Congress should continue the process of revision. The partisan press agreed that the tariff question was not a closed issue. Independent papers voiced the view that business would adjust itself to the new law and would tend to become firmer and safer.⁶⁸

After the enactment of the tariff bill Congress adjourned on August 28, and members went home to begin their active campaigns for re-election.

More than a decade later, while he was still a member of the House, Williams related to several of his colleagues the

⁶⁶ *Cong. Record*, 53 Cong., 2 Sess., 8482.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 55 Cong., 1 Sess., 220.

⁶⁸ For numerous excerpts from the press of the country, see *Public Opinion* (Washington), I-XLI (1886-1906), and *Review of Reviews* (New York), X (August and September, 1894).

account of his initiation at his first Congress. He had brought with him a letter of introduction to "Old Dave" Culberson, a Representative of Texas. The man who had written the letter intended that Culberson should be the guide, philosopher, and friend of the newly elected member from Mississippi. Williams took the letter to Culberson and told him "the joy was to be his." The old warrior did not seem so much enraptured. This, Williams did not recall until later. He went to his mentor often and sought his advice freely. "When I was not obtaining guidance, philosophy and friendship from Old Dave, I was busy discovering something that should emblazon my name high upon the roll of fame."

Sometime during the session there appeared a bill which appropriated a relatively small amount of money for some insignificant cause. As he listened very attentively, Williams concluded that unless the appropriation were defeated, the foundation of the Republic should be lost and these United States would probably follow "Rome and maybe Greece a few furlongs down the slippery declivity that leads to the morass of swamped democracies." The freshman of the House went to Old Dave and talked to him:

"Judge, isn't this an iniquitous measure?"

"I reckon it is, John," he said in his Lone Star drawl.

"Well, wasn't it reported from some committee?"

"Yes, John, I reckon it must have been, these things generally are."

"Do you know who was on that committee, Mr. Culberson?"

"Yes, John, if I remember rightly, I was on that committee."

"Couldn't you have beaten it there, Mr. Culberson?"

"Well, John, I would have found it very difficult."

"Is there any way we can defeat it now, Mr. Culberson?"

"Oh! yes, John, you can defeat it by a point of order."

That was enough for the budding statesman of Yazoo County. He leaped into the aisle with index finger upraised and a full consciousness that the destiny of the Republic rested on his shoulders.

"A point of order, Mr. Speaker," Williams yelled.

The proceedings of the House came to an abrupt halt. All the members looked at Williams with intense interest and wonder. The Speaker banged with his gavel.

"What is the gentleman's point of order?"

"Then," related Williams, "it flashed over me that I didn't know what my point of order was. I turned around to ask my guide, my philosopher, and my friend. He wasn't in his seat. I looked down the aisle and caught a glimpse of his shaking shoulders disappearing in the cloakroom.

"If I hadn't had a sense of humor, I would have been left up in the air in the most ridiculous position ever seen in the House. As it was, the position was ridiculous enough. I had enough sense of humor to see how I had been done and turned around and said:

" 'Mr. Speaker, on further reflection, I will withdraw my point of order.' "

To Old Dave Culberson he was always the young man who had made the point of order.

Soon after the incident occurred there came to Washington an artist named Homer Davenport. He would "seduce statesmen into posing for him and then produce the most ungodly caricatures of them in the paper." After Davenport had been displaying his talents to the public for several days, he had spread such panic among the politicians that no one could be induced to go near him. He drew Senator Edward C. Walthall of Mississippi, the stateliest statesman that ever came out of the South, fondling a pig. Walthall, whose dignity never had been impugned before, looked for Davenport for four days with a gun. Davenport, informed

of his danger, had his meals sent to him in his hotel room.

A short while later the caricaturist wanted to draw Culberson, "But Old Dave had seen the Walthall picture and was wary." Finally, Davenport came to Williams, and Williams agreed to assist him. Then the artist went around to Culberson to carry out the plan.

" 'Judge,' said the nefarious Davenport, 'I design to make a scurrilous picture of John Sharp Williams but he won't stand hitched. Can you engage him in conversation in the Metropolitan lobby while I stand by and sketch him?'

"Old Dave chortled till apoplexy almost got him and agreed," Williams related. "That morning he rounded me up in the lobby and engaged me in a long and purposeless conversation, during which Davenport took up a position slightly to leeboard and made sketches. But he didn't worry me any. I could see his pad, and I saw that he was sketching Old Dave.

"When he was through he tipped the wink to Old Dave, and Culberson shook hands with me and went away with his shoulders shaking. Two days later he fell upon me in the lobby fairly apoplectic with rage. 'Look here, John!' he sputtered. 'See what this damned infamous Yankee artist has done to me. He has sketched me drawing a pug dog by a string—me, Dave Culberson,—a pug dog, by Gawd, sah! What will they think of that down in Texas? By Heaven, John, I'll kill the scoundrel! Me, with a pug dog! Why, it'll ruin my career, sah! And where, John, where did he ever get a sketch of me?'

" 'Why, Judge, don't you remember the time we were lined up here in the lobby—'

" 'But he was sketchin' you, John,' broke in Old Dave.

" 'I think not, Judge,' I said. 'I asked him to sketch you, and he's a man of honor.'

"Old Dave looked at me for two minutes without saying a word. I endured his gaze without flinching. Then he laid his arm on my shoulder.

“ ‘John,’ he said, ‘come into the bar, sah, and do me the honor to have a drink with me. John, you are done initiated.’ ” ⁶⁹

Williams' campaign for renomination by the Democratic party was practically completed when Congress adjourned. It had been necessary for him to leave the matter largely in the hands of his friends and his younger brother, Kit. His constituents seemed satisfied with the performance of their Congressman. The campaign for election in November was somewhat a duplication of that which had been held two years earlier, as Williams and Ratliff were again the candidates. The total number of votes cast in the district decreased by two thousand. Both nominees lost votes, but the Democratic majority suffered more.⁷⁰ The Populist candidate carried only his home county, Attala, and that by eleven votes. Although Williams received a majority of 3,793, he could not help inquiring who had knifed him in Attala.⁷¹

Upon his re-election Williams removed his name from the shingle of the law firm that he had helped to found. He had not taken a case after his first election to Congress; Kit had handled the new cases and had received the fees. The law profession had served its purpose as a steppingstone to politics. Williams was determined to live a public life if he could and “make a profession of higher politics.” ⁷²

The third session of the Fifty-third Congress opened very tamely on December 3. The financial condition of the government and country continued to be unsatisfactory. A number of factors contributed to the creation of what Cleveland called the “endless chain,” ⁷³ by which gold was con-

⁶⁹ New York Times, December 12, 1905; February 7, 1909.

⁷⁰ William D. McCain, “The Populist Party in Mississippi” (M.A. thesis, University of Mississippi, 1931), 25.

⁷¹ Williams to L. W. Hughes, November 12, 1894, in Williams Papers.

⁷² *Id.* to Thomas W. Shelton, November 10, 1906, *ibid.*

⁷³ Annual message to Congress, December 3, 1894, in Richardson (ed.), *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, IX, 553.

stantly pumped out of the Treasury through the presentation of notes for redemption in gold. The gold thus secured was hoarded or exported to Europe. This deadly process continued, although it was checked somewhat by the bond issues, especially the third, which had followed the Morgan agreement.⁷⁴ The revenues of the government were repeatedly failing to meet the annual current expenses. These were the conditions when Secretary of the Treasury Carlisle, after much study and many conferences, prepared his report recommending the creation of a flexible currency; a similar plan was enacted finally in the Federal Reserve Act of 1913.⁷⁵ There was great divergence of opinion on the Carlisle recommendation when it was brought before the House Ways and Means Committee. A bill incorporating Carlisle's proposal was reported within three weeks. Nelson W. Dingley, as leader of the Republicans, went so far as to say that every phase of the bill needed amending. Substitute bills soon appeared. Caucuses which agreed with Carlisle proved nonbinding, and the efforts of the Secretary of the Treasury to secure remedial legislation failed.⁷⁶

A further attempt to agree upon emergency revenue legislation began in the House on December 27, 1895. A bill providing for the issuance of bonds redeemable in gold was introduced. This bill had for its purposes the securing of gold for the redemption of United States notes and the maintenance and protection of the gold reserve.⁷⁷ It was made a special order, and the day following its introduction it passed the House by a vote of 171 to 136.⁷⁸ From the Senate Finance Committee room this bill came on January 7, clad in the armor of free silver: obviously it could have been so amended only by a coalition in the committee

⁷⁴ Alexander D. Noyes, *Forty Years of American Finance* (New York, 1909), 231-32.

⁷⁵ James A. Barnes, *John G. Carlisle, Financial Statesman* (New York, 1931), 360-62.

⁷⁶ *New York Times*, December 14, 1894; January 8, 1895.

⁷⁷ *Cong. Record*, 54 Cong., 1 Sess., 343.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 401.

room.⁷⁹ The bill was placed on the calendar as reported. It was debated from time to time until February 1, when it passed the Senate by a majority of seven.⁸⁰

In 1896 the Republicans were in control in the House. As a result of the 1894 election, a workable Democratic majority had changed to an overwhelming Republican majority. The majority report of the Ways and Means Committee, as given by Dingley, advised nonconcurrence in the Senate amendments.⁸¹ The minority members reported concurrence and a debate was in order.⁸²

Dingley cited to the House the horrible example of Mexico as an object lesson in the free coinage of silver. This attempt of the "gentleman from Maine" to compare the friends of silver to Mexican politicians drew from Williams a sarcastic retort. After stating that several of the most backward parts of the globe—Haiti, Cuba, and Turkey—had the gold standard, he added: "If I should use such an argument . . . everybody would say, 'Williams, you are making a fool of yourself.' But when one of these gentlemen—not a 'silver lunatic,' but a 'gold lunatic'—indulges in that sort of talk, wise men absolutely applaud it on the floor of the American House of Representatives! [Laughter and applause.]"⁸³

The world's annual production of gold, according to Dingley, had increased over 75 per cent since 1870.⁸⁴ Williams admitted the increase but doubted whether it had

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 484. The Senate Finance Committee consisted of seven Republicans: Justin S. Morrill of Vermont; John Sherman of Ohio; John P. Jones of Nevada; William B. Allison of Iowa; Nelson W. Aldrich of Rhode Island; Orville H. Platt of Connecticut; and Edward O. Wolcott of Colorado. The six Democrats on this committee were Daniel W. Voorhees of Indiana; Isham G. Harris of Tennessee; George G. Vest of Missouri; James K. Jones of Arkansas; Stephen M. White of California; and Edward C. Walthall of Mississippi.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 1216.

⁸¹ The Senate, 1895-1897, was composed of 45 Republicans, 39 Democrats, and 4 independents.

⁸² *Cong. Record*, 54 Cong., 1 Sess., 1290.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1483.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1349. The increase was from \$118,000,000 in 1870 to \$205,000,000 in 1895.

increased more than the uses to which it had been put—the demand. His contention was “that the people of the United States, with their enormous uses for money . . . would bring the two bullions, as well as the two coins, together on a plane of intervaluation corresponding with the ratio of 16 to 1 fixed by law.”⁸⁵

Josiah Patterson, a Memphis Democrat, after devoting some time to the history of American financial legislation, gave facts about silver as a standard money in the United States. “The free and unlimited coinage of silver in the ratio of 16 to 1” when the commercial ratio was 32 to 1 meant “silver monometallism” to Patterson.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, if in this manner the greatest nations had eliminated silver as a standard money by “economic evaluation,” to Williams it seemed that silver was suffering from “legislative mayhem.”⁸⁷

Williams agreed that the gold standard in the United States was no different from that in England and countries of continental Europe, but he added that we were suffering from it. The financial disease of falling prices, declared Williams, had visited every country with the gold standard for the past twenty years. A Pennsylvania member of the House, Charles W. Stone, had accounted for this condition by citing the improvement in manufacturing, transportation, and banking facilities.⁸⁸ For this argument Williams had two answers. In the first place, the invention of transportation facilities, economies in transportation, and the methods of carrying on banking, though greatly improved since 1873, did not begin then but had been improved at as great a rate from 1850 to 1873. In the second place, when low prices exist because of the decreased cost of production, transportation, manufacture, and exchange, two things happen: “First, the consumer gets what he buys cheaper, and secondly . . . the capital invested . . . gets the same or

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1482.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1483.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1476–79.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1404–1405.

higher percentage of reward, while the labor engaged in either receives higher compensation." The argument was concluded with the statement that low prices thus caused always brought prosperity and improvement for both the consumer and the producer, but that in the period from 1873 to 1896 conditions had not answered that description.⁸⁹

Some had expressed the opinion that gold and silver were already on a parity. Williams replied by paraphrasing Patrick Henry: "You stand here to-day crying, 'Parity, Parity!' and there is no parity." The parity as provided for in the act of 1890 was artificial, not natural. The difference between artificial and natural parities, contended Williams, was represented by the amount of interest paid by the government on its own bonds to secure gold in order to maintain this parity.⁹⁰ How long could the national government maintain this artificial parity, Williams asked. He proposed that the problem be solved "by requiring payment of gold into the Treasury for taxes, or by ceasing to pay gold out on demand."⁹¹

After long debate, the House did not concur in the Senate amendments. The report of the nonconcurrence of the House was read in the Senate, but no further legislative action was taken on the proposed issuance of gold bonds by the government.⁹² A prominent editor wrote that the country was "much benefited by non-action at the present time on . . . the silver question."⁹³

The Treasury gold reserve problem was, however, solved by other methods. The fourth bond issue of the Treasury, announced on January 6, 1896, was oversubscribed by the public, showing a restoration of confidence in the government.⁹⁴ Many bankers exchanged gold at the Treasury for

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1483-84.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1485.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² On monetary questions the Republicans remained disunited. See *Senate Documents*, 54 Cong., 2 Sess., No. VII, 179-80.

⁹³ *Nation*, LXII (February 13, 1896), 129.

⁹⁴ See Grover Cleveland, *Presidential Problems* (New York, 1904), 121-70, for a summary of the Executive's part in this financial crisis.

legal tender, partly because the bankers as a group favored sound money and feared that another bond issue would play into the hands of the silver party. Exports, especially of wheat, increased greatly. Thus, foreign exchange had to turn in favor of New York. The election of William McKinley assured a gold standard and the continuation of sound money. Also, discovery of gold mines in several parts of the earth and the invention of the cyanide process for the extraction of that metal increased the amount of the basic money.⁹⁵

Although government action on the issuance of gold bonds subsided, public discussion of the policy increased. As early as February, 1895, a national silver meeting was held in Washington. William Jennings Bryan looked upon this meeting as the beginning of political efforts to unite all the various elements of opposition to the "gold bugs." Meetings were held throughout the country by both wings of the Democratic party. Congressman Thomas C. Catchings of Mississippi wrote to a member of Cleveland's Cabinet early in April of 1895: "a little free silver book called 'Coin's Financial School' is being sold on every railroad train by the newsboys and at every cigar store." In the opinion of Catchings it was being "read by almost everybody."⁹⁶ Intense feeling in the South was compared with that which immediately preceded the Civil War. In the spring and early summer of the election year, gold advocates began an active campaign to offset the seemingly tireless energy of Bryan and other leaders of the silver group. Their attacks centered in Chicago and elsewhere in the Middle West. Although Carlisle made only a few well-timed and well-placed

⁹⁵ Davis R. Dewey, *Financial History of the United States* (New York, 1922), 454; *id.*, *National Problems, 1885-1897* (New York, 1907), 276. Also Noyes, *Forty Years of American Finance*, 254; and Mark Sullivan, *Our Times; The United States, 1900-1925* (New York, 1926-1935), I, 299.

⁹⁶ Thomas C. Catchings to Daniel S. Lamont, April 6, 1895, quoted by James A. Barnes, "The Gold-Standard Democrats and the Party Conflict," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XVII (1930-1931), 422-50.

speeches, he was considered, next to Cleveland, the leader of the gold element in the Democratic party.

The Mississippi state Democratic convention met in Jackson on April 29, with overwhelming endorsement of silver a foregone conclusion. Delegates were selected to attend the national convention. Senator Walthall was endorsed for the vice-presidency, and a resolution was passed instructing the delegates to place his name before the national convention for that nomination. Before selecting the five delegates from the state at large, the Mississippi convention adopted a resolution expressing itself wholeheartedly in favor of the free coinage of silver in the ratio of 16 to 1. The *Natchez Daily Democrat* pointed out the precarious position in which the convention placed itself by declaring for a policy which was very doubtful of acceptance by the National Democratic Convention.⁹⁷

Williams' fight for renomination in the Fifth Congressional District was characterized as the liveliest in the state.⁹⁸ Fortunately, Congress adjourned on June 11, an unusually early date for the long session to conclude its work. Because of this fact members of Congress were canvassing the voters by midsummer. Only late in the campaign did those who were closely observing the progress of the nomination campaign concede to Williams the inside track.⁹⁹ After winning the Democratic nomination in the district convention, however, Williams had to defeat three opponents in the general election. Besides the Populist W. H. Stinson, the gentleman from Yazoo was opposed by two Republican candidates. The Populist nominee for Vice-President, Tom Watson, unsuccessfully tried to prevent the nomination of John Sharp in the Democratic campaign as well as his being elected in the general election which followed. Williams confessed later that his political career would have ended at this time had it not

⁹⁷ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, May 1, 1896.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, May 31, 1896.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, August 15, 1896.

been for the influence of Senator James Z. George. The Senator wrote letters to his friends in the Fifth District and aided in other ways, although he was advised by Williams and others not to do so, as it might be against the political interests of George himself.¹⁰⁰ The closeness of the contest was more apparent than real. Williams received 10,475 votes against 2,215 for Stinson and 354 for the two Republicans combined. This campaign proved to be the last time that Williams had any serious opposition during his career as a Congressman. In Mississippi, as elsewhere, the Populist party was in the wane.

On the national stage the election was more intense and exciting than it was in the Fifth Congressional District or elsewhere in Mississippi. As the two major parties split on the money issue the gold Democrats realized their hopeless situation and many openly espoused the cause of McKinley Republicans.¹⁰¹ Mark Hanna's dollars and the tactics of the Republican factory owners, perhaps, saved the day for the Republican party. A change of fifty thousand votes from McKinley to Bryan in strategic states would have resulted in the triumph of the silver Democrats. Bryan's verdict on his defeat was: " 'I have borne the sins of Grover Cleveland.' " ¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Jackson *Daily News*, January 23, 1908.

¹⁰¹ Barnes, "Gold-Standard Democrats and the Party Conflict," in *loc. cit.*, 422-50.

¹⁰² McElroy, *Grover Cleveland*, II, 237.

Chapter V

THE DINGLEY TARIFF AND THE GOLD STANDARD

ONLY two days after his inauguration on March 4, 1897, William McKinley summoned a special session of Congress to meet on Monday, March 15. Congress, thus convened, was advised by the President to "first provide sufficient revenue" by the enactment of a protective tariff and "to faithfully administer the Government without the contracting of further debt."¹ The verdict of the people, however, had been for sound currency with the tariff issue somewhat overshadowed, though the "full-dinner pail" argument was effectively used.

The opening of Congress on March 15 "was usual and commonplace" except for the change in the make-up of the gallery audience, for the unusual floral offerings, and for the climax when Dingley introduced the proposed new tariff bill. Only those having tickets issued by members of Congress were admitted to the galleries of the House. As a result many more ladies were present than formerly. It was not until after "Czar" Reed had been elected over the Democratic nominee, Joe Bailey, and the Congressmen had begun to choose, by lot, their respective places to sit, that beautiful floral tributes began to pour into the House chamber. It was noticed that practically all of these costly floral wreaths, some of them six and eight feet high, were given to those Congressmen who held important positions in the Republican party and especially to those who came from the manufacturing section of the

¹ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 1 Sess., 19.

country.² Most assuredly the "forest" of protection was moving down upon the Democratic members of the House.

As the Republicans had gained a majority in the House in the election of 1894, the Republican members of the Ways and Means Committee of the preceding Congress had begun the preparation of a tariff bill on December 10. These committeemen voted to have it ready for presentation at the special session of the incoming Congress,³ and disappointed those who anticipated its presentation to the last session of the old Congress. Nelson Dingley, Jr., retained his chairmanship of the Ways and Means Committee, and on March 19 reported a bill (H. R. 379) "to provide revenue for the Government and to encourage the industries of the United States."⁴ This bill was made a special order with an agreement to vote on its passage on March 31.⁵

Was the real need of the country more protection for the manufacturer? President McKinley had said as much in his first message to Congress. Many thought it a dangerous step to revise the tariff, particularly when the Treasury showed an annual deficit of millions of dollars.⁶ But Albert J. Hopkins, a Republican Representative from Illinois, cited many recent large financial losses throughout the country and declared that these were the "fruits of free trade and Democratic administration."⁷ Williams was convinced that the great need of the time was more purchasing power on the part of the public: "The consumer is hungering and is shivering for want of the goods for which he yearns, but which he can not buy."⁸

² *New York Times*, March 16, 1897.

³ Edward N. Dingley, *Life and Times of Nelson Dingley, Jr.* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1902), 414.

⁴ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 1 Sess., 71.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 72-77.

⁶ *New York Times*, December 9, 1896.

⁷ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 1 Sess., 131.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 219.

An able presentation of the Republican views on this question was given by Jonathan P. Dolliver of Iowa. The most meritorious feature of the bill, in his opinion, was that sectional influence had not been heeded in the preparation of the schedules.⁹ Williams agreed with Dolliver that this tariff was not a sectional issue, but disagreed with his contention that neither was it a class issue. "A protective tariff," contended Williams, "proceeds upon the assumption that . . . the right exists to tax the capital and labor engaged in agriculture in order to give artificial, law-bred prosperity to the capital and labor engaged in manufacturing." ¹⁰

The bill as reported by the House contained duties on raw cotton, barley, oats, hay, butter, eggs, cattle, hogs, horses, and many other products, to which the Republicans "pointed with pride." These schedules, they argued, kept it from being "class legislation." According to Williams the value of agricultural products for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1896, "in round numbers, was two thousand millions of dollars. Our exports of agricultural products amounted to \$580,000,000. Our importations of staple agricultural products . . . amounted to \$12,900,000." The only way to protect the western farmer and the southern planter, continued Williams, was by "a bounty on agricultural exports." ¹¹ Did the Republican framers of the bill know these facts? Would they have placed a tariff on agricultural products knowing that the prices of these commodities would be increased? Williams emphatically said "No," because the manufacturers would demand and dictate "a cessation from legislation whose effect would be to raise prices of the things upon which they subsist." ¹² It was easily seen by this speaker why the tariff worked a hardship on the farmer. "The North," said the gentleman from Mis-

⁹ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 220-21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 220.

¹² *Ibid.*, 220.

issippi, "is a majority, and the majority has molded every tariff law, naturally enough, in its own interest."¹³

The duty on raw cotton was not in the bill when it finally passed. Williams had predicted as much with this challenge: "You dare not vote for it, for the very simple reason that if you did there would be a howl from every New England cotton factory . . . to the effect that they 'would have to go out of the business' and cease to manufacture certain lines of cotton goods unless they could get the 'raw material'—long-staple cotton—[duty] free."¹⁴

Many of the speakers expressed a desire to better the conditions of the farmer. There were differences of opinion as to what agriculture needed and in regard to the means to be used to reach the desired end. Dolliver stated, amid the applause of his Republican friends, that "the farmers . . . are longing for the music of the old factory bell, calling back the idle millions to the deserted workshops."¹⁵ This longing could be fulfilled by the enactment of the Dingley bill. Williams packed his reply to this romantic statement into one sentence: "The farmer can not purchase, therefore the retailer can not sell, therefore the jobber can not market his goods, therefore the manufacturer can not make them to a profit . . . and therefore it is that the gentleman from Iowa 'yearns for the factory bells calling back millions to work.' "¹⁶

A Tennessee Democrat in some notable remarks pictured the depressive, almost chaotic, financial conditions of the farmer. Agriculture was being humbugged, thought Benton McMillin. "What have . . . [the framers of this bill] proposed for the farmers? To tax them more! . . . More than 50 per cent of our people are engaged in agriculture and are not benefited by this measure."¹⁷ As Williams had

¹³ *Ibid.*, 221.

¹⁴ Duties on cotton bagging and ties, which the southern farmer had to buy from a manufacturer to enclose every bale of cotton ginned, were retained in the bill.

¹⁵ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 1 Sess., 194. ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 220. ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 230-31.

previously done, he showed the fallacy of taxing farm products when such a small amount was imported. Edward L. Hamilton, representing a Republican constituency in Michigan, glowingly pictured the "protected" farmer under the Dingley bill. He could sow and harvest protected wheat with protected teams. Protected hogs could "root in American free soil," while the free hens laid protected eggs in a protected haymow. Free bees would hang in blossoms of protected fruit to gather protected honey. The farmer could drink free coffee and tea sweetened by sugar "almost free."¹⁸

The consideration of the bill by paragraphs began on March 26. Time-consuming tactics were so successfully used by Democrats that only a small part of the bill, Schedule A, was completed before the date previously agreed upon for the final voting. Several amendments were accepted while the bill was in the House; only one of them, however, really affected the nature of the measure. An amendment proposed by Charles H. Grosvenor of Ohio made the duties retroactive on imports after April 1. The reason for this attempt was that the high mark of customs receipts was being broken almost daily¹⁹ by foreign exporters in an endeavor to get goods into the United States before the higher rates became effective. This provision was eliminated by the Senate. On March 31 the Dingley tariff bill passed the House. Williams, in unison with 121 others, voted nay; but the bill was upheld by 205 yeas, a majority of 83.²⁰

The Philadelphia *Inquirer* announced that "the tariff bill is safely through the House," and correctly predicted that in the Senate "the debate will be long and heated." The New Orleans *States* expressed somewhat the same idea: "There is a reason to believe . . . [the tariff bill] will be

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 337.

¹⁹ New York *Times*, March 16, 1897. Tables of current custom receipts are given.

²⁰ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 1 Sess., 557.

roughly handled in the Senate." The Indianapolis *News*, while admitting that the bill would at least be discussed in the Senate, doubted whether it would be improved, and then added: "It can hardly be made worse." The Natchez *Daily Democrat* predicted that the bill was likely "to strike a snag, figuratively speaking, in the Senate."²¹

The bill referred to the Senate Finance Committee on April 1 was favorably reported on May 4 by Nelson W. Aldrich, chairman of the committee, "with sundry amendments."²² The measure, transformed by 872 amendments, was finally brought to a vote on July 7, and was passed, 38 to 28. One Democrat, Samuel D. McEnery of Louisiana, voted for the bill although the minority consisted entirely of Democrats. Most silver men and Populists were included among the twenty-three Senators who refrained from voting at all.

The Conference Committee appointed by the House and Senate began at once the voluminous task of reconsidering the 872 amendments incorporated in the bill by the Senate. Reports of the committee to the House and Senate ten days later, on July 19 and 20, showed that about four fifths of the Senate amendments had been accepted.²³ Salvos of Republican applause greeted Chairman Dingley when he arose on July 19, held aloft a handful of papers, and said in calm tones: "Mr. Speaker, I desire to present the conference report on the tariff bill."²⁴ The House agreed to the report on the same day that it was received by a vote of 187 to 116.²⁵ The Senate concurred, 40 to 30, five days

²¹ Quoted in *Public Opinion*, II (April 9, 1897). The *Inquirer* was Republican; the *States* and *Daily Democrat* were Democratic; the *News* was then independent. Natchez *Daily Democrat*, April 1, 1897.

²² *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 1 Sess., 879. For a treatment of Senator Aldrich's part in the enactment of the Dingley tariff law see Nathaniel W. Stephenson, *Nelson W. Aldrich, A Leader in American Politics* (New York, 1930), 141 ff.

²³ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 1 Sess., 2699-2754.

²⁴ Natchez *Daily Democrat*, July 20, 1897.

²⁵ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 1 Sess., 2750.

later. That day, July 24, 1897, as President McKinley affixed his signature, the Dingley Tariff Act became a law.²⁶

The prompt action of the House during the entire course of the bill was in marked contrast to the deliberateness of the Senate. The result was "due mainly to greater party cohesion and more rigid party discipline, enforced by the genial despotism of the autocratic Speaker of the House."²⁷ While the bill was under consideration in the Senate, the House proceedings were for the most part a matter of daily meetings for an hour or less and adjournments.²⁸ Not until the last day of the special session were the committee assignments announced—a departure from the custom of making them public soon after the first session of a new Congress opened.

The duties in the Dingley law were high and all-inclusive, but manufactured products as a group were protected more than agricultural products. In 1898 and 1899 the average rate of import duties under the Dingley Act rose to the percentage level of 49 $\frac{7}{8}$ and 52, respectively;²⁹ whereas in 1895 and 1896, under the Wilson-Gorman Act, the average rate was 41 $\frac{3}{4}$ and 40 per cent. There were provisions in the tariff whereby under very limiting conditions the President might conclude reciprocity treaties with other nations; by sections 3 and 4, he might suspend free admission of specified articles when other countries imposed duties which were "reciprocally unequal and unreasonable." Other provisions contemplated a reduction of duties by the Executive "after securing reciprocal and reasonable concessions." The President was given the power to conclude commercial

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2909, 2910, 2962.

²⁷ Frank W. Taussig, *The Tariff History of the United States* (New York, 1923), 352.

²⁸ William A. Robinson, *Thomas B. Reed, Parliamentarian* (New York, 1930), 352.

²⁹ Noyes, *Forty Years of American Finance*, 269. The general rate on imports in 1893 under the McKinley Act was 49 $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

treaties with a maximum of 20 per cent reduction of duties. Such treaties would have to be ratified by both the House and the Senate.⁸⁰

Very little attention was given to the fiscal turn of the Dingley law. Proposals to increase certain internal taxes, such as those on tobacco, beer, and business transactions, were made in the Senate Finance Committee but were defeated before the passage of the bill. The fact that the revenue derived from the Dingley Act did not meet the necessary governmental expenses provided Williams with the occasion for one of the jokes for which he was rapidly gaining national recognition. The Republican Administration could use the Dingley Tariff bill for one more term of Congress "as the fellow proposed to use the corpse of the man who was drowned and whose body was not discovered until some time afterwards, when it seems that it had formed food for the eels, a number being caught. After it was found and about to be buried in a decent and proper manner, one of the bystanders suggested: 'Boys, this fellow seems mighty near decomposed, but we can plant him once more, for one more night. He is good bait for the eels.' " ⁸¹

The majority members of the House were loud in their attestations of Republican prosperity. The year 1898 was a Congressional election year, and there were many Republican speeches in keeping with the full-dinner-pail philosophy of William McKinley in 1896. These certifications of prosperous times reminded Williams of the country farmer who started to town carrying eggs to market. The man had two baskets, one containing a great many eggs and the other a large number of affidavits to the effect that the eggs were fresh and sound. The eggs obtained poor sale because there were so many affidavits. "It had the effect of making prospective customers rather doubtful about the eggs—a little

⁸⁰ For a full discussion of these many limitations, see Taussig, *Tariff History of the United States*, 352-55.

⁸¹ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 2 Sess., 1061.

suspicious of their soundness.”³² This anecdote when applied to the conditions of the late winter of 1897-1898 was a well-aimed jibe at Republican “prosperity.” The Republicans sought to open the mills and factories further to enhance prosperity. Williams diagnosed the economic disease as lack of purchasing power among the masses of the people. Instead of opening the mills he would open the mints to a freer coinage of silver.

The dawn of the twentieth century disclosed American manufactured articles appearing in ever-increasing quantities and value in the various ports of the world. A transition from an agricultural to a manufactural exportation was rapidly becoming a *fait accompli* in the United States. What had caused this enormous growth of foreign markets for American finished products? The Republicans attributed this expansion of our markets directly to the protective features of the Dingley tariff. Williams saw the foundation for the growth of world-wide markets for American goods in free interstate commerce, in lack of militarism as compared with European countries, and in the peculiar self-reliant individualism of the American people.³³

Williams firmly believed that under the Dingley Tariff Act of 1897 an industry, ordinarily unprofitable, could be created in the United States. His “Great American Banana Industry” found its way into the press:

“There is in the United States, I suppose, one hundred acres of land where bananas can be grown in the open air, and yet I could were I the legislating body of this country, . . . put a tax of one dollar a piece on bananas . . . and inside of five years I could . . . have created and exploited a vast banana industry. . . . A great many people who formerly ate bananas could not buy any bananas at all, and some people would have to buy fewer bananas; but . . .

³² *Ibid.*, 1516. Quoted by Arthur P. Hudson (ed.), *Humor of the Old Deep South* (New York, 1936), 208.

³³ *Cong. Record*, 57 Cong., 1 Sess., 2145; also *ibid.*, 58 Cong., 2 Sess., 2042.

a great many people . . . would eat them because the common people—Dagoes, Jerseymen, and Mississippians—could not.”³⁴

The outcome was then pictured: “If I continued that system of taxation in existence for twenty years . . . there would have come . . . a new generation that ‘knew not Joseph’ nor cheap bananas; and the moment sensible people came into power with the idea of revising the banana schedule these gentlemen who ‘knew not Joseph’ and had gone into the American banana business and, perhaps, formed a banana trust would come into the Committee room of the National Legislature . . . giving utterance to cries of unutterable woe: ‘Are you going to strike down the Great American Banana Industry; are you going to reduce the duty from a dollar apiece on bananas to 80 cents? We can’t stand it. It will ruin us. Are you going to make the people engaged in banana-raising go to the soup houses? Are you going to discriminate in favor of pauper tropical sunshine against self-respecting American hothouse laborers?’ ”³⁵

With a customs duty of one dollar each on bananas the American consumer, Williams estimated, would be paying about ninety cents apiece for his bananas. The protectionists were claiming that home competition would lower prices below the price in the open market. Williams answered them:

“After fifteen or twenty years ‘home competition’ would have reduced the price of bananas in the American market to, let us say, 40 cents apiece, and then Republican orators and politicians would say privately, in newspapers, and on the stump and within these walls . . . ‘Lo, and behold! See how a protective tariff has reduced the price of bananas from 90 cents apiece in 1950 to 40 cents apiece in 1965—

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 58 Cong., 1 Sess., 381. Quoted in *Forum* (New York), XXXV (1904), 329-30.

³⁵ *Cong. Record*, 58 Cong., 1 Sess., 381.

nearly 50 per cent decrease in price to the consumer! Protection did it!

"Yes! A reduction from superlative extortion to comparative extortion!

"But in all this picture keep in mind one thing: While protectionism lasted bananas would never reach three for a nickel, because if they did, that public enemy—tropical sunshine—would be master." ⁸⁶

One plank in the Republican platform had advocated the acceptance of a gold standard monetary system. The promise of currency reform was interrupted by war early in 1898, and it was not until after the close of that struggle that the McKinley Administration was able to carry out the campaign promise. During the years of strife the advocates of currency reform had not been idle. Immediately after the close of hostilities conditions were ripe for the long-promised monetary reform. The fact that the national government had accumulated a greater debt was an incentive to creditors to make their loans more secure. Industries were booming, manufacturers could not produce goods fast enough to keep up with their orders, foreign commerce was expanding enormously, harvests were abundant, and the revenues of the government were far beyond expectation.

Such were the conditions when Jesse R. Overstreet, a Republican member from Indiana, placed before the House on Monday, December 4, 1899, a bill later known as the Gold Standard Act of 1900. This bill did not travel the usual route to a committee room.⁸⁷ Neither had it originated there.⁸⁸ John Dalzell of Pennsylvania offered a motion which provided for general debate on the bill for one

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 9.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 147. The Republican House caucus had near the close of the preceding Congress appointed a committee. This committee had held meetings in cities of the North and East with groups of businessmen. The bill (H. R. 1) had been framed and reported by this Republican caucus committee.

week, December 11 to December 18, with a roll call on its final passage on the latter date.³⁹ Despite strenuous objections by Bryan Democrats, the House agreed by a majority of twenty to this motion of the Representative from Pennsylvania.⁴⁰

Williams addressed the House on Friday morning, December 15, not for the purpose of setting forth what he thought were "sound principles of bimetallism," but for the purpose of noticing a few things that had arisen in debate. He did express again his conviction on silver coinage, however, near the beginning of his remarks. When questioned by James T. McCleary as to whether or not he favored a free silver amendment, Williams replied that "had I the power . . . I would to-morrow open the mints to the free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1, with but one doubt in my mind, and that doubt would be as to whether it were not better to go to the world's legislative ratio of $15\frac{1}{2}$ to 1." ⁴¹

This was not to be the final view of the Mississippi Representative on the coinage of silver. He was not adamant but was always open to conviction. Speaking from the same floor in 1904, "as plain Mr. Williams, standing simply in his own poor, plain shoes," he said in part: "I have no doubt of this fact, that parties do not make issues, but that conditions make issues, and issues make parties, and that the time and circumstances immediately antecedent to and accompanying the time and circumstances make conditions. Now, then, it is not left for any man nor any party to make a platform which shall be a real issue; time and circumstances and conditions make it, and the conditions which I have outlined have been such that the silver question is relegated to the rear." ⁴²

Williams, in his speech on the Gold Standard Act,

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 466.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 58 Cong., 2 Sess., 1225. January 26, 1904, was the date of the speech.

pointed out that on April 2, 1792, Congress, in establishing the United States mint, had provided for coinage in the ratio of 15 to 1.⁴³ In 1834 a new enactment changed the ratio to 16 to 1.⁴⁴ McCleary maintained that a commercial ratio between the two metals had caused gold to flee the country under the former law and silver under the latter.⁴⁵ Williams argued that there was no commercial ratio between the two metals in the sense of a ratio independent of their uses as money. A commercial ratio could not be ascertained "unless both metals were equally and everywhere all over the world not money, or unless both of them were equally and everywhere all over the world money." It was a conflict of legislative ratios that made gold leave prior to 1834 and silver subsequent to that date. France had a legislative coinage ratio of 14½ to 1, and at that time, 1834, "overtopped us in her influence on the commerce and exchanges of the world." It merely proved, said Williams, "that as between two conflicting legislative ratios the stronger will prevail." ⁴⁶

Republican members of the House admitted freely that the amount of money in circulation had increased greatly since 1896. The Bryan Democrats had promised the people an increase in the amount of money through the instrumentality of the free and unlimited coinage of silver, but the increased circulation had come via the gold route. This condition influenced Williams to exclaim sarcastically: "Mr. McKinley is responsible and should have the credit for the discovery and the exploitation of the gold mines in South Africa and of those in the Klondike. Mr. McKinley and the Republican party should be kept in power because the cyanide process of treating gold ores has decreased the cost of production of gold and increased its volume." ⁴⁷

In 1893, as already noted, Williams had urged that the

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 368-69. Several sections of this act were quoted by Robert L. Henry of Texas.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 467.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 468.

annual production of silver could be absorbed beneficially by business.⁴⁸ At that time, according to this Congressman, the world's annual production of silver was \$210,000,000; that of gold, \$109,000,000. In 1899 the gold production alone was near \$300,000,000. The world had absorbed this increased supply of gold with benefit to everybody everywhere. "What was then denounced as repudiative inflation," continued Williams, "has since occurred by the accidents of discovery and by the incidents of invention and has inflated the general average of prices only 6 or 8 per cent!"⁴⁹

Dolliver had stated in his remarks before the House that we had been, for all practical purposes, on the gold standard since 1834.⁵⁰ "Give us," responded the Mississippi Representative, "the law of Andrew Jackson. . . . We will have what we want, whatever you call it, namely, the free coinage of every ounce of gold or silver which may be brought to the mints at the ratio of 16 to 1."⁵¹ Williams stated that the Democratic party had never been the friend of either metal alone, nor against either. "It is just as glad to see an increase of the basic money of the world through the instrumentality of gold as through that of silver."⁵²

Many of the Republicans and some of the Democrats thought politically from the factory down. Williams, a cotton planter of the Lower South, saw in the farmer the basis of our welfare and thought in terms of the farmer or planter up. That the opening of the mills had caused the increased circulation of money and had made business profitable was the expressed belief of some of the House.⁵³ But Williams was convinced that they had the cart before the horse. "There must be somebody with money to buy goods before mills can sell them."⁵⁴

The final House vote on the gold standard bill was taken

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 467.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 468.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 469.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 468.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 469.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

on December 18. It showed 190 members for the bill and 150 against it. Republicans supporting the measure broke into cheers when the Speaker announced the passage of the bill. They were aided by eleven Democrats, six of them from New York.⁵⁵

This measure was promptly placed before the Senate and referred to the Finance Committee, whose chairman reported a substitute bill.⁵⁶ Fundamentally, the Senate substitute was not unlike the House bill. Senator Aldrich, opening the debate on the bill on January 4, declared its general purpose was to declare anew that gold was the standard money of the United States.⁵⁷ The six weeks' debate in the Senate led Mr. Dooley to remark that "th' whole currency question is a matter iv lungs."⁵⁸ The Senate passed the substitute bill on February 15 by a majority of seventeen.⁵⁹ A compromise was soon reported to the House and the Senate with favorable results.⁶⁰

Williams, six years later, recalled a part of his argument against the passage of this law when he spoke to the House on May 23, 1906: "I said [at the time the Gold Standard Act was passed that] 'If this country is prosperous six years with a gold standard, then I will confess that every lesson I have ever learned must be unlearned; there can not be prosperity and a descending scale of prices with a gold standard except upon the impossible proposition of a hitherto unprecedented increase in the volume of gold production'—a thing

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 572; *New York Times*, December 19, 1899.

⁵⁶ This procedure occurred on December 19, 1899, only one day after the passage of the bill by the House. See *Cong. Record*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 578.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 652.

⁵⁸ [Finley P. Dunne], *Mr. Dooley in Peace and in War* (Boston, 1899), 180.

⁵⁹ *Cong. Record*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 1835. The vote was 46 to 29.

⁶⁰ The House roll call was 166 yeas and 120 nays. See *ibid.*, 2863. In the Senate the report was accepted by a vote of 44 to 26. See *ibid.*, 2590. The act became a law on March 14, 1900, with the approval of McKinley. See *ibid.*, 2905.

which I no more expected than I expect to fly, and nobody else expected it.”⁶¹ The *Nation* seemed to sum up public opinion when it commented that “no political party can successfully assail this legislation during the next six years, and it is not likely that any party will desire to do so at the end of that time.”⁶²

Within definite limitations Williams was thoroughly convinced that political leaders should assume the laissez-faire policy. That the basic economic law of supply and demand governed the price of metallic money was a proposition he believed as firmly as he believed that this law controlled the price of wheat. “I know that God did not . . . say to metallic money: ‘Thou alone art exempt from this universal law of value, determining market prices.’ ”⁶³ There was no exact mathematical relationship between supply and demand of these commodities, urged Williams, but a correlation of the world-wide estimated supply and demand.⁶⁴

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 59 Cong., 1 Sess., 7324. For a good summary of the bill see John H. Latané, *America as a World Power, 1897-1907* (New York, 1907), 121-22. Also see Charles S. Olcott, *The Life of William McKinley* (New York, 1916), I, 361.

⁶² *Nation*, LXX (March 15, 1900), 201.

⁶³ *Cong. Record*, 58 Cong., 2 Sess., 1224.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1225.

Chapter VI

AN ANTI-IMPERIALIST RAISES HIS VOICE

THE closing years of the nineteenth century witnessed the leading nations of Europe trying frantically to establish "a place in the sun" or to enlarge such a place as had been established previously. The major portion of Africa had been partitioned a generation earlier, chiefly by England, France, and Belgium. These nations, aided by the others, were now in the process of dividing China. The United States, at the time of the partitioning of the "dark continent," had not gained entrance into the group of world powers. She had been an expansionist nation since infancy, but all the territory acquired before 1867 had been contiguous to the United States, and all of the land gained before 1898 had been settled by Americans.

In the United States the generation beginning in 1865 saw the nationalization of our Federal government and the beginning of a growth which ultimately brought this country into the front rank as an industrial nation. American commerce and finance began to find their way into distant lands and many markets. The United States put on her mantle of imperialism and sought to gain her place among the world powers. All of these movements were prompted chiefly by economic motives, but were aided by chauvinism, missionary zeal, and political ideology.¹

Because of the acute domestic conditions during Cleveland's second Administration, his foreign policy, with the

¹ For a good discussion of these motives of American imperialism, see J. W. Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898; the Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands* (Baltimore, 1936).

exception of the Venezuelan crisis, was crowded into secondary notice by his problems at home. Cleveland's aggressive endeavor, which resulted in a solution of the territorial controversy between Venezuela and England in accord with the findings of the American Commission, was an outstanding achievement for peaceful arbitration and the Monroe Doctrine. The significance of the settlement in promoting amiable relations between the two English-speaking nations was hardly realized at the time. It continued the policy of friendship between England and the United States and laid a more secure foundation for the arbitration of controversies in the future. Williams observed closely and sympathetically the healing of the wounded feelings, but he took very little active part in any of the Congressional deliberations on foreign affairs.

The control of Hawaii by the United States was foreshadowed by the reciprocity treaty of 1875, which prohibited these islands from selling or leasing land to other powers. Later, the Hawaiian Queen Liliuokalani was dethroned, and a provisional government sought annexation to the United States. Cleveland rebuffed the frenzied expansionists when he decided that the Hawaiian "incident" was fomented by American economic interests.² Because President Cleveland had successfully checked their policy, McKinley fell heir to the continued demands of the annexationists. The Hawaiian problem was only one spoke in the wheel of international affairs which was to turn the McKinley Administration in such a way as to focus attention on foreign policies at the expense of domestic affairs.

Williams, who was not an expansionist, opposed the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands as he later opposed the annexation of other islands in the Pacific. His expressed conviction was that the American sphere of influence in-

² See James A. Gillis, *The Hawaiian Incident* (Boston, 1897), for a documentary examination of President Cleveland's attitude toward the revolution of 1893. See also, Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898*, pp. 110-45.

cluded only the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, and that beyond this area we should not go. The provisional Hawaiian government was termed a "carpet-bag oligarchy," which had come to us to obtain protection from the possibility of an uprising of its own people. It was not Hawaii, contended Williams, but American money which was invested in Hawaii that was speaking so loudly before the United States Congress.³

James A. Tawney urged the United States to take possession of the islands, for (1) they would be offered "upon the altar of mongolianism" if we abandoned them; (2) another power in possession of them would be dangerous to us; (3) they were of considerable economic value to this country; (4) "if we do not somebody else might."⁴ Williams questioned the expediency of these arguments. Were we to go around the world in the spirit of Don Quixote with his faithful old squire annexing islands to prevent them from being Mongolized? We did not have to be scared in order to be patriotic. Did not England and France own territory closer than two thousand miles to the United States? Were we to go roaming around and girdling the earth like knights-errant seeking to annex islands because they produced ferns, palms, and alligator pears? The same line of argument could be used to incite the cupidity of the people to endless annexations. "Shall we take a thing we do not want because somebody else may take it?" Speaking sarcastically he said: "I have seen little children, and some of them of the best families, proceed upon that sort of theory."⁵

To the Representative from Mississippi the proper solution of this problem was the most important issue before the American people at that time. Once in possession of this territory the Americans, "with their pugnacity of the English and their sentimentalism of the French," would never relinquish it, but rather go on securing strategic points

³ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 2 Sess., 2863.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2837-42.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2863.

around the earth. In short, it was not the fear of check or failure that appalled Williams but rather the fear of success.

The annexation of these islands, which were two thousand miles from San Francisco, our nearest port, and twice as far from our national capital, would serve as a precedent. Did the American people wish to add Asiatic people to our Union? ⁶ This change in our traditional policy was what Williams lamented and what he fought to prevent. He summarized his views as follows: "The people are not yet ready, and I pray God they may never be ready, to leave behind them their proud and secure isolation as an American continental power—compact, all-powerful for defense, seeking home-happiness, making for peace." ⁷

With the beginning of the war with Spain, America's interest in possessing the Hawaiian Islands was greatly enhanced because of their value as a coaling station and as a war base. In short, we needed them in our business.⁸ Under such a zealous patriotism it was not surprising that any opposition in Congress was powerless. The minority report of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, of which Williams was a member, would have prevented annexation. But the joint resolution providing for the annexation of Hawaii passed the House on June 15, 1898, by a vote of 209 to 91.⁹ Three Republicans opposed, and eighteen Democrats favored, annexation.¹⁰ Williams concluded the debate for the opposition and pointed out that the greatest difficulty would be in the question of government after annexation. On July 6 the Senate, after much debating, voted

⁶ *New York Times*, June 17, 1897.

⁷ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 2 Sess., 2865.

⁸ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, May 31, 1898.

⁹ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 2 Sess., 6019. Speaker Thomas B. Reed, who was in opposition to the Republican majority, was absent from the House on the final vote. For a very good account of Reed's attitude toward the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands, see Robinson, *Thomas B. Reed*, 363-67. An effort to make a solid Democratic vote in opposition to the joint resolution failed when some Democrats refused to be bound by the caucus.

¹⁰ *New York Times*, June 16, 1898.

42 to 21 for annexation.¹¹ With the President's approval the United States gained its first island possessions far out in the Pacific.¹²

While the bill for the government of Hawaii was being adopted by the House in 1900, Williams offered several minor amendments, all of which were rejected without roll calls.¹³ The white population in the islands was a very small minority. Nevertheless, Williams stood for white supremacy there as he had in Mississippi, California, and elsewhere within the realms of the United States. One of his proposed amendments would have established white supremacy in Hawaii by an educational restriction on suffrage.¹⁴ Williams urged that the territorial governments—Alaska, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii—should have delegates upon the floor of the House, who would possess all privileges of the House except voting.¹⁵

For humanitarian, economic, military, and political reasons, Congress early in 1896 enacted concurrent resolutions declaring that "a condition of public war" existed in Cuba, and that the United States, though remaining neutral, should extend the offices of the American government to Spain for the recognition of Cuban independence. Such resolutions may have been "buncombe, pure and simple,"¹⁶ but neither side of the House dared oppose them.

The Republican platform of 1896 referred to the Cuban struggle for independence as follows: "The government of the United States should actively use its influence and good offices to restore peace and give independence to the is-

¹¹ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 2 Sess., 6712.

¹² For a good summary of the background of the Hawaiian annexation, see Archibald C. Coolidge, *The United States as a World Power* (New York, 1909), 315-21; Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898*, pp. 230-60.

¹³ *Cong. Record*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 3816.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3855-57.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3857. Williams later made the same argument for a Porto Rican delegate. See *ibid.*, 60 Cong., 1 Sess., 5963.

¹⁶ *New York Times*, April 7, 1896.

land.”¹⁷ President McKinley followed Cleveland’s policy for a short time, with the hope of solving the problems of Cuba without a war. In this decision he was greatly influenced by the unpreparedness of the United States, by a change of government in Spain, and by his peace-loving nature.¹⁸ Williams in the House urged the recognition of Cuban belligerency and independence.¹⁹ Resolutions, to this effect were introduced in the House, but the Committee on Foreign Affairs failed to report them.²⁰ The efforts of the Democrats to secure the recognition of the resolutions on the floor through the suspended rule proved unsuccessful. Later in his Congressional career, Williams claimed that war with Spain could have been prevented only by a recognition of Cuban independence.²¹

Members of Congress and other Americans went to Cuba to gain personal information about conditions on the island. Senator-elect Hernando D. Money of Mississippi was one of those who assumed a self-imposed role of information gatherer.²² The reports of Money and others were partly responsible for providing relief funds to ameliorate bad conditions. A bill providing \$50,000 for relief of the sufferers in Cuba passed by an overwhelming vote in the House. Williams was among the supporters.²³ In speaking for this bill on May 20, 1897, the Representative from Mississippi called the attention of the House to some known facts about General Valeriano Weyler’s “campaign of suppression” in Cuba. Some seven hundred American citizens in Cuba had been imprisoned in concentration camps. Many others had been driven from their homes. Such a

¹⁷ *Republican Campaign Textbook* (Washington, 1896), 255.

¹⁸ Olcott, *William McKinley*, II, 3-4.

¹⁹ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 1 Sess., 1193.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 57 Cong., 1 Sess., 7323.

²² *Natchez Daily Democrat*, January 13, 1897. Money was at one time a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House. Williams secured the vacancy on this committee created by Money’s promotion to the Senate.

²³ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 1 Sess., 1194.

background proved ideal for American "yellow journals," especially as William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer were engaged in a fierce struggle for the control of sensational journalism in New York.²⁴

The influence of this journalistic rivalry was felt in the halls of Congress. "Spain," contended Williams, "has no more right to put men to death by starvation than she has to put them to death by the bullet."²⁵ The only reason he could ascribe for the inactivity on the part of the executive department was the fear of disturbing business. Williams argued that the geographical position of Cuba—its nearness to the southern part of our country and the fact that it commanded the mouth of the Mississippi River—placed the island within our sphere of influence. On January 19, 1898, the House had under consideration a Cuban resolution. Williams proposed an amendment which would create a commission to proceed to the island, and, if possible, negotiate a treaty of "peace, amity, and commerce with the Republic of Cuba."²⁶

With the publicizing of the Depuy de Lome letter and the sinking of the *Maine*, war proved inevitable. It made no difference to the American patriots that the letter was addressed to a personal friend in Cuba, and that it had been stolen from the post office in Havana by an insurgent spy and held in reserve until the psychological moment had arrived. Nor did the jingoists think of changing their clamor for war when no one could fix the responsibility for the *Maine's* destruction. No more did Spain's complete surrender to our demands or the pleas of Stuart L. Woodford, our minister to Spain, carry any weight with "right thinking Americans." War was declared on April 25, although McKinley had ordered a blockade of the northern coast of

²⁴ Joseph E. Wisan, *The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press, 1895-1898* (New York, 1934), 22-26.

²⁵ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 1 Sess., 1194.

²⁶ *New York Times*, January 20, 1898. The chair ruled the amendment out of order.

Cuba four days earlier. George Dewey at Hong Kong, where he had been sent more than a month before by the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt, was in readiness to sail to Manila Bay when he received the message from Secretary Long to proceed. The war was no fight between equals.²⁷ With sorrow Cleveland wrote Olney: "I cannot avoid a feeling of shame and humiliation."²⁸

According to the Treaty of Paris, signed December 12, 1898, and ratified by the United States Senate the next year, Spain gave the American government Porto Rico and Guam. The Philippines were purchased by the United States from Spain. Dewey's victory at Manila Bay had paved the way, of course. Before the Senate received this treaty, Williams had been heard at length on the floor of the House in opposition to the retention of the Philippines.²⁹

On December 20, 1898, Williams expounded his idea on the proposed annexation of the Philippines. When annexation to the United States is considered, said Williams, three test questions must be asked, and the wisdom or unwisdom of the action must be adjusted by the nature of the answers: "First, will the proposed annexation necessitate the permanent increase of our Army and Navy to defend it. . . . Secondly, is the territory to be annexed near our base of operations? Thirdly, is its population of a character homogeneous with our own, or of a character easily assimilable, or is it . . . owing to sparsity of settlement and nearness of reach, inundatable by our people?"³⁰ These three questions became the foundation of Williams' argument against the annexation and later retention of these islands.

Williams had learned from the teachings of our fore-

²⁷ See French E. Chadwick, *The Relations of the United States and Spain; The Spanish-American War* (New York, 1911), for a scholarly treatment of this war.

²⁸ Cleveland to Richard Olney, April 26, 1898, quoted in Walter Millis, *The Martial Spirit, A Study of Our War with Spain* (New York, 1931), 161.

²⁹ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 2 Sess., 6015.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3 Sess., 339.

fathers and history that "a grand and splendid imperial sway" could not be maintained without a large and well-disciplined standing army and that such an establishment would "eat up the substance of the people." He condemned the tendency toward militarism because it created an atmosphere which was "antagonistic to the development of individual liberty and of local self-government." He expressed an avowed faith in a national government strong to the utmost degree for self-defense but carrying with it "neither pretext, nor desire, nor temptation for offense."³¹

Was there a type of territorial expansion which would increase the self-defensive power of our people and at the same time lessen their danger of armed conflict with others? He maintained that a territory "which by the character of its population would increase by accretion" the population of the United States, or a territory that would furnish "vacant space for the outgrowth, development, and multiplication" of our existing population would qualify. But the density of the population in the peopled islands of the Philippines was as great as that of Missouri, and our race had never yet succeeded in building homes and rearing children to the third and fourth generations within the tropics.³² By a simple illustration Williams expressed his belief that the Filipinos could not be assimilated. "You can not increase the number of oranges in a basket by piling peanuts on top of them, no matter how many peanuts you place in the basket; the more peanuts you put there the less room will exist for oranges."³³

In answer to questions from various members of the House, Williams stated that if conditions arose whereby the people of Canada, Cuba, Mexico, or Porto Rico voted without any outside influence to be annexed to the United States, they could, in keeping with his requirements for annexation, be annexed profitably.³⁴ Williams cautioned

³¹ *Ibid.*³² *Ibid.*, 338-39.³³ *Ibid.*, 339.³⁴ *Ibid.*, 340-41.

everyone to bear in mind that "There is no just government which is not founded on the consent of the governed." " ³⁵

The Mississippian resorted to a joke to illustrate his stand on the twofold policy of expansion and annexation. Much was being written and spoken about "annexationists" and "anti-annexationists," about "expansionists" and "anti-expansionists." Williams once overheard two friends "carrying on a very warm argument the subject of which was 'woman,' one contending that 'woman' was far superior to 'man' and but little below the angels, the other arguing that 'woman' was inferior to 'man' and a sort of bridge between him and the lower animals." As they apparently could not settle the argument, one of them turned toward Williams and said, "I will leave it to John here as to which one of us is nearer right. John, what do you think?" John replied simply, "Gentlemen, which 'woman' are you talking about?"

It was obvious to Williams that in the annexation of some 1,200 islands, populated by nearly 8,000,000 people, at a distance of 7,000 miles from our nearest coast, the United States was assuming a great financial burden. The increased taxes necessary to keep this territory a part of the United States would be shifted finally to the pocket of the farmer, because agriculture was the basis of all production and from the soil ultimately all things had to be paid.³⁶ The farmer's opposition to this proposed annexation was stated from another viewpoint: "The farm [Philippine Islands] does not adjoin our plantation, is too far off for our personal attention, and *has permanent and irremovable tenants claiming a fee simple right in the land superior to the title of our grantors, tenants whose character we do not like, and who, if we buy the farm and go on it, will shoot us, unless we shoot them.*" ³⁷

Williams believed our civilization would be better for

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 340.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 341.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 345.

the Filipinos, but believed also that "there never was yet tyrant or conqueror, who did not proceed upon the theory that his government was better for the conquered than their independence."³⁸ The question for us to decide was not the welfare of the Filipinos, but whether or not the proposed annexation was better for us. Williams held that our institutions, "both fundamental and administrative," were unsuited for the purpose of holding alien people in subjection.

What was to be done with this archipelago of islands if they were not annexed to the United States? Were they to be returned to Spain? To the latter question, Williams emphatically replied: "In God's name, no!" To the former question, he offered some suggestions by way of an answer. Personally, he favored granting them complete independence, though he did not in the least doubt that they would misgovern themselves as the Chinese, Venezuelans, and others were then doing. "The very fact that a people is incapable of self-government," said Williams, "is a reason why they should have neither part nor parcel in our citizenship or government."³⁹ In the course of his remarks he proposed to sell the islands to England, a maritime nation with a navy to maintain her empire, or to Holland.⁴⁰ Nothing was clearer to Williams than that if we had the right to buy the Philippines, we also had the right to sell them.

In answer to the pleas that our commercial interests demanded the possession of the Philippines, Williams pointed out that only a very small percentage of our Oriental trade came from these islands. Our commercial policy in the East had been significantly named the "open-door" policy. The retention of these islands, he contended, would compel us to sacrifice the open-door policy in the Orient or go back on the Constitution. Our tariff laws would necessarily be extended over these islands, and it would be absurd for us

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 341.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 342.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 344-45.

to exercise one policy in the Philippines and to demand another one in China.⁴¹

No person would dare allude to the Philippines as a part of the American continent. Williams showed that the Monroe Doctrine could not be maintained should these islands be retained. We could not say to European countries in the future that we would not permit any European colonization or acquisition in the Western Hemisphere if we held territorial possessions in the Old World, because they would answer: " 'You have yourself obliterated the line of demarcation. You no longer have any special American sphere.' " ⁴² He feared that in becoming a world power the United States would lose its traditional continental isolation, and that the Monroe Doctrine would cease to be an effective weapon against European expansion into the New World. The historian James Ford Rhodes upheld the same contention: "The Monroe Doctrine had come to be regarded as sacred and the spirit of it, if not the letter, was violated when we annexed the Philippines." ⁴³

A correspondent of the *New York Times* wrote that "Mr. Williams' remarks were listened to with careful attention, and his colleagues gave him a hearty round of applause when he concluded." ⁴⁴ A southern paper reported that several times during the lengthy speech applause was given the speaker.⁴⁵ Walter Millis, writing a third of a century later, said of this speech: "Mr. Williams exposed the hypocrisy of our 'moral obligation' with all the irony of a tongue that was to be famous for a generation." ⁴⁶

Joseph G. Cannon of Illinois introduced in the House on February 17, 1899, a bill providing the \$20,000,000 necessary to carry into effect the Treaty of Paris with Spain.⁴⁷ It

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 343.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ James Ford Rhodes, *The McKinley and Roosevelt Administrations, 1897-1909* (New York, 1922), 109.

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, December 21, 1898.

⁴⁵ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, December 21, 1898.

⁴⁶ Millis, *Martial Spirit*, 394. ⁴⁷ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 3 Sess., 2036.

is interesting to note that many Democrats who had expressed disapproval of the annexation of these islands cast their votes with the Republican majority to cause an overwhelming vote of 219 to 33 for this appropriation.⁴⁸ Bryan was probably more responsible than anyone else for the shift of the Democrats from opposition to approval in the House as well as in the Senate. By aiding the Republicans to ratify the treaty he sought to make imperialism the campaign issue in 1900. "With the fire of this lofty purpose in his eye Bryan went to Washington and cajoled and dragooned seventeen Democrats and Populists in the Senate into approving the Spanish treaty."⁴⁹

Williams had stated upon the floor of the House several days before the introduction of this bill why he would support such a measure. Although the House had a constitutional legal right to kill it, to do so would place that body in an attitude of repudiating an international obligation. The United States as a nation and the Democrats as a party could not afford to place themselves in that position.⁵⁰ The monetary consideration, said Williams, was "a mere bagatelle in comparison with the results that will follow our proposed new departure in national policy and in our international relations."⁵¹

As soon as the Filipinos ascertained the real significance which the United States attached to McKinley's "benevolent assimilation,"⁵² they began a new war for independence under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo, on February 4, 1899. As Williams pointed out, Republicans had prophesied peace with the acceptance of the Treaty of

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 2119-20.

⁴⁹ Paxton Hibben, *The Peerless Leader, William Jennings Bryan* (New York, 1929), 222.

⁵⁰ This is the same attitude that William Jennings Bryan assumed in regard to the ratification of the Treaty of Paris.

⁵¹ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 3 Sess., 1862-63.

⁵² This was the last expression used in President McKinley's proclamation of December 21, 1898. See *United States Senate Documents*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., No. CCVIII, 82-83.

Paris, when "every sensible man knew" that we were already at peace with Spain and that possession of the Philippines without the assurance of temporary occupancy would bring war with the Filipinos.⁵³ It took a longer period of time and cost more money for the United States to quell this rebellion completely than it had taken to defeat Spain. The final scene of the revolution was not enacted until the middle of 1902, although Aguinaldo had been captured in March, 1901. In round numbers the war against the insurrection of the Filipinos cost the United States \$200,000,000 in emergency army appropriations.

On December 14, 1899, Williams introduced a joint resolution in regard to the policy of retaining the Philippines.⁵⁴ The *New York Times* indicated that the resolution was "the result of consultation among a number of Democratic leaders of the House." The paper believed that Bryan was speaking through the Mississippian, and looked with doubt and suspicion upon this report, which it characterized as "wild, reckless and impossible in its policy."⁵⁵ Speaking under the five-minute rule on one of the emergency appropriations for the army, Williams gave a summary of this Democratic plan. He would have our army first establish peace, but in the meantime the Filipinos and the world should know what our policy would be in regard to them and their territory at the cessation of hostilities. This proposed policy included (1) independence, with the United States in control of foreign affairs for ten years; (2) refunding to the United States the \$20,000,000 which had been paid Spain; (3) an understanding that any foreign encroachment in the islands within the decade would be regarded as an unfriendly act by the United States; (4) reimbursing the United States for expenses incurred in preventing foreign encroachments; (5) cession to the United States of

⁵³ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 3 Sess., 1803.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 435.

⁵⁵ *New York Times*, December 16, 18, 1899.

coaling stations and a naval base; and (6) the open door in perpetuity to American commercialists and missionaries. Williams would have the great American republic announce to these half-clad and half-civilized brown people that "For a limited length of time we will stand by you while you learn how to stand up. At the expiration of that time we will leave you your liberty, your independence, your autonomy, provided only that you enter into treaty to do what is just and right by us in consideration of what we have accomplished for you, namely, this, your proposed liberty and independence."⁵⁶

This statement may appear upon first thought to indicate that Williams had changed his attitude toward indefinite retention of the islands. Really he had only become convinced that to grant immediate and complete independence without any ties would be inexpedient. He had changed his plan from complete independence to independence with the United States as a temporary protector.

In an executive session of the Senate on January 18, 1900, the one important cause for the retention of the Philippine Islands was brought out.⁵⁷ German colonial ambition was the *bête noire*. Germany stood ready, should the United States reveal her intention of abandoning the islands, to secure a footing in Manila, and to gain possession of as much of the archipelago as she desired. Such a move, declared the American jingoists would be an irreparable loss to American prestige and commerce.

On February 6 the House listened to a new address by Williams in opposition to the retention of the Philippines. This time he treated the commercial aspect of the policy. He held that the absorption of the islands would be ruinous ultimately to American producers of cotton, rice, tobacco, hemp, and sugar.⁵⁸ The Philippines in 1900 were not a

⁵⁶ *Cong. Record*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 927.

⁵⁷ *New York Times*, January 19, 1900.

⁵⁸ *Cong. Record*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 1571. Excerpts of this speech were quoted in *New York Times*, February 7, 1900.

"drop in the bucket" commercially to any of these industries in the United States, but the development of a modern agricultural system in the future would bring their products into competition with the farmers of the United States. Williams voiced one exception to agricultural competition in stating that if the Filipinos had factories introduced and were educated to wear a complete costume of clothing, they might prove valuable cotton customers. Protectionist members of the House who had argued time and again against permitting the pauper laborer to compete with the American laborer, he contended, were now attempting to admit millions of oriental paupers into direct competition with American labor. The cause for the inconsistency was the influence of "syndicates and capitalists" with money to exploit these pauper laborers. He, though by no means a protectionist, would never vote to annex oriental pauper competition against his constituents.⁵⁹

Time has revealed the fallacy of another of the Mississippian's strong points of attack. He did not believe that the Philippines could be retained unless a standing army were maintained there. Had not England found it necessary to keep troops in East India and in Egypt; and France, in Algiers and in Madagascar? In fact, Williams in turning the pages of world history had not been able to find an instance in which a "white or European race has held in subjection an Asiatic race where it has not been found necessary to keep up an immense army of occupation."⁶⁰ There were then 65,000 men "wearing the blue uniform of the Republic" in the Philippines at an annual cost of \$91,000,000. The expenditures required for such an army in the Philippines were "three times the amount of the entire import and the entire export trade of the entire archipelago with all the world, and over ten times all possible profits that could possibly be made out of them." It was evident that the American people through taxation would pay for the mainte-

⁵⁹ *Cong. Record*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 1571.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1569.

nance of such an army, and that only a few manufacturers, capitalists, and commercialists would profit by a forcible retention of the territory. An even greater cost of subduing these people was the sacrifice of thousands of our best young men. There were "higher things than this little money aspect of the case," said Williams, but he was "now addressing the spirit of 'commercialism,' and it, unfortunately does not care a bawbee for human life."⁶¹

Williams spent much time investigating what he thought to be one of the most difficult problems of the proposed annexation, namely the status of the Filipinos in relation to the Constitution of the United States.⁶² He cited quotations from such eminent statesmen and jurists as Alexander Hamilton, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, John Jay, John Marshall, and Roger B. Taney. These authorities upheld Williams' contention that people acquired with territory by the United States were citizens of the United States and had all the powers granted by the Constitution to native-born Americans.⁶³ These opinions and decisions of the Supreme Court had been forgotten, said Williams, and in their place had arisen the tyrant's plea—political necessity. It was absurd to say that a government created by the Constitution could deprive a people of the right to appeal to the Constitution which gave birth to the government. "You can not hold the Philippines *at one and the same time outside of the Union and inside of the Union.*"⁶⁴ Congress had no right to legislate for foreigners as such. They, as the inhabitants of an annexed territory, were annexed with the land. They were annexed as citizens because subject peoples were impossible in the American system.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1569-70. The retention of these islands has not required much of an army, but it has certainly been one of the main reasons for great expenditures on the United States Navy since 1900.

⁶² For a discussion of the relation of the Constitution to the Philippine Islands, see Carman F. Randolph, *The Law and Policy of Annexation* (New York, 1901), 29-105.

⁶³ *Cong. Record*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 1573-75.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1572.

Congress and the President, both born of the Constitution, had been ascribed powers beyond the Constitution. Others took part in the debate that day, but according to the *New York Times*, the only feature was Williams' speech.⁶⁵

Not only was there opposition from the Democrats to the retention of the Philippines, but also from a number of Republicans. Strangely enough, Jacob Gould Schurman and Judge William Howard Taft, the two men whom McKinley had chosen to head his commission of investigation in the islands, were opposed to the policy that the Administration had adopted. Carl Schurz, a Republican of liberal tendencies, agreed with Williams in desiring to establish a protectorate over the islands as had been done in Cuba, thus permitting the islands to govern themselves. A small but vigorous opposition coterie in the Senate was led by George F. Hoar of Massachusetts, who based his arguments on "the consent of the governed" clause of the Declaration of Independence and reached the same conclusion as Schurz and Williams.

The last speech that Williams made against the retention of the Philippines was inserted in the *Congressional Record* on April 3, 1900. His arguments were directed against the "mission" plea and the "manifest destiny" justification, which were two of the salient points in the defense of the Administration's policy. In regard to the former, Williams was satisfied that natives as well as Americans had a mission. He could not agree with McKinley, whose conscientious Methodism had convinced him that "in the Philippines the white man's burden was laid upon the United States."⁶⁶ The United States, Williams argued, was a democratic republic whose cornerstone was the "liberty and the happiness of the individual citizen, as contradistinguished from the happiness, the welfare, or the supremacy of a class, or the splendor of a state."⁶⁷ Since this was true, could

⁶⁵ *New York Times*, February 7, 1900.

⁶⁶ Rhodes, *McKinley and Roosevelt Administrations*, 187.

⁶⁷ *Cong. Record*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., Appendix, 151.

it be the mission of a democratic *constitutional* government to carry the flag and government where the Constitution, democratic institutions, and democratic relations and conditions among the citizens could not follow? This southern leader reasoned that the United States had no mission to civilize and Christianize the Filipinos "by means of Krag-Jørgensen rifles and the sword of the cavalry." In a press interview with one of his home-state papers he was even more outspoken in his denunciation of the "mission plea": "Curse the hypocrisy of the fellow who tells me that God put us in the Philippines. Nobody but a hypocrite would do it, and nobody but a fool would believe it." ⁶⁸

While professing ignorance of the exact meaning of "manifest destiny," Williams believed it was included in " 'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he surely reap.' " If contempt of constitutional limitations and guarantees were sown abroad and the belief prevailed that these were " 'swaddling clothes that we have outgrown,' " ⁶⁹ we should some day reap a similar disregard for those highest traditions at home. Williams was a firm believer in a strict interpretation of the Constitution in foreign affairs. There were no higher laws than the Constitution for him. On one occasion he stated forcefully his constitutional views: "No man can vote against . . . [the Constitution's] plain, palpable, and obvious provisions without committing perjury in the sight of the great God before whom he raised his hand when he was sworn in as a member of this House." ⁷⁰

Both McKinley and Roosevelt were ably assisted in the administration of affairs in the islands by Elihu Root, who, as Secretary of War, 1899-1904, was, according to James Ford Rhodes, the creator of the Philippine policy." ⁷¹ Military control of the islands was superseded by civilian control

⁶⁸ Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, January 12, 1906.

⁶⁹ *Cong. Record*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., Appendix, 151.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1573.

⁷¹ Rhodes, *McKinley and Roosevelt Administrations*, 206; Philip C. Jessup, *Elihu Root* (New York, 1938), I, 329-72, holds the same contention.

when Taft became Governor of the islands, July 4, 1901, succeeding General Arthur MacArthur, who had been a military commander.

After the definite decision had been made to retain the various insular possessions, there were problems to be solved in connection with their relationship to the United States. The commercial relations within the newly created empire were of utmost importance. Joseph B. Foraker of Ohio introduced in the Senate a bill for the government of Porto Rico. This bill, which contained a provision for a 15 per cent duty on imports from the island, went into effect May 1, 1900.⁷² That Williams opposed such a customs duty may be easily conjectured.

The validity of this law was tested by the United States Supreme Court in the "Insular Cases" of 1901. In *Downes v. Bidwell* the court held that although Porto Rico was appurtenant to and belonged to the United States, it was not a part of the United States within the provision of the Constitution which declared that "all duties, imports, and excises shall be uniform throughout the United States." The Foraker Act was constitutional and the imposed duties of 15 per cent on imports from Porto Rico must be paid.⁷³ This decision, in common terms, meant that the "Constitution did not follow the flag." Mr. Dooley gave a characteristic interpretation: "No matter whether th' constitution follows the flag or not th' Supreme Court follows th' illiction returns."⁷⁴ As a result of the "Insular" decisions Williams commented sarcastically on the Supreme Court as follows: "Great is the Supreme Court! . . . Especially when it reaches its decisions by a shifting majority of one. Great is the Supreme Court! greater than anything under our Government because it is above our Government. It constitutes the sovereign power itself. It is greater than two-thirds of

⁷² For the Foraker bill, see *Cong. Record*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 3696-97.

⁷³ *Downes v. Bidwell*, 182 U.S. 244 (1901).

⁷⁴ Charles B. Elliott, *The Philippines* (Indianapolis, 1916-1917), I, 496, n. 16.

Congress and three-fourths of the States, because it can 'amend' the Constitution of the United States by consultative 'construction.' " ⁷⁵

With the enactment of the Spooner Amendment on March 2, 1901, and the Philippine Government Act of July 1, 1902, the relationship between these islands and the United States was legally established.⁷⁶ Neither of these pieces of legislation was carried easily, as both encountered stubborn resistance in each branch of Congress. Among the opponents in the House was Williams, who was a member of the Committee on Insular Affairs during the Fifty-seventh Congress, 1901-1903. He gained the floor several times during the first and second sessions of this Congress to recite his arguments. His point of attack now shifted from the constitutionality of territorial annexation, retention, and customs duties to the inexpediency of "going a world powering." ⁷⁷ Was it wise, equitable, just, right, and Christ-like? ⁷⁸ He answered each inquiry in the negative, but his contentions were to no avail in influencing the House against the policy adopted by the Republican leaders. He retained his fear of governmental overstretching and remained true to his convictions that this "world powering should die a borning." Williams had simply swung with the unreasoning popular current when he helped push the United States into war with Spain. On the question of re-

⁷⁵ *Cong. Record*, 57 Cong., 1 Sess., 412.

⁷⁶ For an able defense of the government's policy in dealing with the Philippine Islands, see Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott (eds.), Elihu Root, *The Military and Colonial Policy of the United States* (Cambridge, 1916), 27-98; also see Jessup, *Elihu Root*, I, 329-72.

⁷⁷ *Cong. Record*, 57 Cong., 1 Sess., 412.

⁷⁸ Quoting James Russell Lowell in *Biglow Papers* with enough change to suit the occasion, Williams said:

"We wuz gittin' on nice up here in our village,
With good old ideas of wut's right and wut ain't;
We kin o' thought Christ went again war and pillage
And that eppylets warn't the best mark of a saint.
But Ted E
Roosevelt, he
Sez this kind o' thing's an exploded idee." See *ibid.*, 7333.

tention he was an independent, with the judgment of history and the opinions of many of the early American Fathers behind him.

One problem which grew out of the naval battle of Santiago Harbor is especially interesting for the insight it gives into a phase of Williams' intellect. The lack of co-operation between William T. Sampson and Winfield S. Schley in this encounter was much discussed, as was also the question which of the two naval officers ought to receive more credit for the victory. To complicate matters Edgar S. Maclay wrote a book in which he denounced Schley as "a liar and a coward," and sought its adoption for use in the classrooms of the naval academy at Annapolis. Proof sheets of the book had been presented to Arent S. Crowninshield, Chief of the Bureau of Navigation of the Navy Department; Sampson; and other naval officers before publication. Williams read the book and introduced a resolution into the House ordering an investigation.⁷⁹ Several months later, when a naval appropriations bill was up for consideration, Congressmen made speeches, some praising Sampson and some giving the glory to Schley.

In this atmosphere Williams made an ironical and sarcastic speech. Half the bravery shown by the heroes of ancient times, he said, would have been lost had it not been for Homer. Although Williams asserted that he knew nothing of the authorship of a poem which he held in his hand, no one doubted that Williams himself had written it. The author had in mind a beautiful old poem about the battle of Blenheim and the glory of Marlborough and of Prince Eugene and of the little boy whose youth and imagination made him very inquisitive about the battle.

Oh, who is Crowninshield, papa,
That he should have the best

⁷⁹ *Cong. Record*, 57 Cong., 1 Sess., 58; *Natchez Daily Democrat*, December 4, 1901, quoted Williams' resolution.

Of everything there is to have
And shine o'er all the rest?

Great Crowninshield, my son, has done
A lot of wondrous things,
And now he reaps the proud rewards
That virtue always brings.

What were the virtuous deeds he did,
That he should simply name
The things he wants for his rewards
And straight annex the same?

Oh, you can never understand
The wonders he has done;
The fight they made on Schley he planned,
And that was great, my son.

What other fights were fought by him
Whose flag so proudly flies
High on our greatest ship, before
The world's admiring eyes?

No other sailor ever sat
Behind a desk and fought
As glorious a fight as that
Or planned as grand a plot.

But when and where did Crowninshield
Stand on the bridge and show
His "bullies" how to train their guns
Against the firing foe?

Oh, fie upon your 'firing foes'
And 'bullies' and such things!
Great Crowninshield sat at his desk
And deftly pulled the strings.

And was that all he did, papa,
That he, with bulging chest,

Should head the list of heroes now,
Eclipsing all the rest?

Go out and chase the put, my son,
And bother me no more;
Great Crowninshield's the greatest tar
That ever stayed ashore.⁸⁰

Williams' opposition in the election of 1898 was negligible. Out of 5,153 votes cast he received all but 200.⁸¹ In 1900 the Republicans polled only 17 votes in his district. According to the census of 1900 Mississippi was entitled to an additional Representative in the national Congress, and the state legislature proceeded to redistrict the state in order to provide for the new Congressional district. Williams lived in Yazoo County; Charles E. Hooker, the one-armed veteran, was a citizen of Hinds; and Patrick Henry, a citizen of Warren. All three of these men were members of the House. Their counties were contiguous, but each had previously been in a different Congressional district. By secretive and skillful manipulations among the state legislators these three Representatives were thrown into the same district, "which meant that two would be elected to remain at home."⁸² The gerrymander enabled some of the ambitious members of the state legislature to become candidates for Congress under more favorable circumstances.

During these days of indecision, in 1901 and 1902, Williams received a telegram from a jovial friend who lived in a county of the old Fifth Congressional District. It read: "Move into Lauderdale County by wire. We'll elect you hands down."⁸³ The Congressman from Yazoo deeply appreciated the message and the sentiment it contained. He soon decided, however, that he could not move into Lauderdale or any other county. Yazoo County had been the home

⁸⁰ *Cong. Record*, 57 Cong., 1 Sess., 5579.

⁸¹ Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, November 30, 1898.

⁸² Dickson, *Old-Fashioned Senator*, 98.

⁸³ Jud Russell to Williams, quoted in *ibid.*, 99.

of his ancestors for several generations. He would not leave the ancestral plantation for mere political expediency. By mutual agreement, Williams, Hooker, and Henry became candidates for the newly created Eighth Congressional District, which was composed of Hinds, Madison, Rankin, Warren, and Yazoo counties. Williams now lived in a district of only five counties, whereas the old Fifth District had been composed of twelve.

The formal announcement of Williams' candidacy for re-election appeared in March. At the same time he "flooded the district with letters, urging the support of his friends."⁸⁴ Immediately after the adjournment of Congress all three candidates hurried home and began active campaigning.

On one occasion Williams was sitting in the lobby of the Spengler House at Jackson talking to a friend when United States Marshal Edgar S. Wilson approached him. Wilson was one of the Republican referees and patronage distributors of Mississippi at that time. The Republican acknowledged the authorship of a private and confidential letter in which he had maliciously made untrue statements about Williams. Upon the invitation from Williams they walked from the lobby of the building out onto the sidewalk. When Williams made ready to strike Wilson, the latter, a much larger man, said, "Williams, if you strike me, I am going to hurt you seriously."⁸⁵ Such a statement only invited attack from the fiery Congressman. Several blows were exchanged, but the excited crowd soon separated them. Both belligerents were placed under arrest, but were released when they promised to appear at the city hall to answer charges of fighting and disturbing the peace.

Williams, though the aggressor, considered the provocation great enough to justify a fight on the public streets in defense of his honor. He did not lose the respect of his fellows when he took the action that he deemed necessary

⁸⁴ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, March 11, 1902.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, August 17, 1902.

as a gentleman. "In the estimation of all right thinking persons, he acted as every honorable man would act under the circumstances." ⁸⁶

In the Democratic primary, held less than a week later, Williams emerged victorious. He carried every county in the district with the exception of Warren. The total vote cast was 5,367, of which Williams received 3,327; Henry, 1,548; and Hooker, 492. Williams' majority over the field was 1,287.⁸⁷ Out of a total of 1,665 votes cast in Yazoo County Williams lost only 9. The Yazoo candidate carried every precinct in Rankin and Madison counties and all but two in Hinds County, where Hooker and Henry each got one.⁸⁸ This was the first election under the terms of the new law by which Democratic Congressional nominations were made by direct primary rather than by district convention. The direct primary received favorable comment as having been conducted fairly without any suspicion of fraud.⁸⁹ The Democratic nominee had no opposition in the general election which followed in November.

The decisive victory which Williams had won in the newly created Eighth Congressional District materially aided him in the realization of a more important ambition. After the general election it was known that the Republicans would retain their majority in the House. Both parties had to name new leaders. Indications were that Joseph Cannon would be named Speaker. Williams and Champ Clark of Missouri were among the Democrats suggested for the minority leadership. According to the *Washington Times* the Republicans would not hesitate to pay Williams the compliment of being the ablest man on the Democratic side, and would have preferred to have any other Democrat oppose them. No man across the aisle enjoyed being drawn into a running debate with Williams,

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Jackson Daily Clarion-Ledger*, August 28, 1902.

⁸⁸ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, August 22, 1902.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, August 29, 1902.

for he was "almost certain to be obliged to take to the tall timber before the discussion had progressed far."⁹⁰

Williams had served ten years in the lower house of Congress. He had mastered the parliamentary rules and regulations of that body and was admitted to be one of its most skillful parliamentarians. He seemed to have the knack of going energetically to the root of any problem which confronted him. His opinions were not changed with every passing breeze of the hour. The *Natchez Daily Democrat* stated that, should such a good turn in the political world occur that Williams should be named minority leader, it would be the first time in the history of the House of Representatives that Mississippi should have had this honor.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Washington *Times*, quoted in *Natchez Daily Democrat*, January 7, 1903.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Chapter VII

THE MINORITY LEADER, 1903-1908: AN EVALUATION

ON November 9, 1903, James Hay of Virginia, chairman of the Democratic caucus, placed before the House the name of John Sharp Williams as the Democratic nominee for Speaker of the Fifty-eighth Congress. Of the 365 votes cast, Joseph G. Cannon, the Republican nominee, received 198, a majority of 31.¹ Williams automatically became minority leader. The new Speaker received the applause of Democrats and Republicans alike when he took the gavel of authority. Williams, in presenting Cannon, said that the majority had selected its best type.

There is no royal road to leadership of either party in the House. The usual highway seems to lead across the mountain of extended tenure and over the prairies of outstanding service on some of its premier committees. Williams had served the House for ten years—through five successive Congresses. This was by no means a very extended career when compared to the tenure of some of the other Democratic members. He had served on the committees on Agriculture, Foreign Affairs, and Insular Affairs for ten, four, and two years, respectively; ² he had rendered valuable serv-

¹ *Cong. Record*, 58 Cong., 1 Sess., 147-48. Arthur W. Dunn, *From Harrison to Harding . . . , 1888-1921* (New York, 1922), I, 388, wrote that Williams' election as minority leader "was a setback for Champ Clark, who would have secured the position if David A. De Armond had not again been a candidate. As he was the senior from Missouri, the delegation of that state voted for De Armond, and the other Democrats turned to Williams."

² See *Official Cong. Directory*, Fifty-third—Fifty-eighth Congresses.

ice in the committee room and had attended meetings regularly. Williams had not, however, been a member of any of the more significant committees usually associated with party leadership. As minority leader he was appointed to the powerful Ways and Means Committee and to the equally influential Committee on Rules. At the same time he relinquished his position on all others.

When Williams entered the House in 1893, "Private" John Allen held a national prominence, which made him the dominant figure of the Mississippi delegation and "to some extent delayed the recognition of the true worth of Mr. Williams."³ This delay had been short, however, and the new member from Mississippi soon gained recognition from his Democratic colleagues. The qualifications upon which Williams was chosen minority leader seem to have been his keen intellect, which had been developed through extensive as well as intensive education, his readiness and versatility upon the floor on all occasions, the sincerity of his loyalty in courageously defending the principles of Jeffersonian democracy, and his ever-present sense of justice and courtesy in parliamentary routine.⁴

The press was practically unanimous in noting that the Democrats had done well in selecting Representative Williams as their leader on the floor. The Indianapolis *Sentinel* thought that "this was a peculiarly wise move" on the part of the minority. The Pittsburgh *Post* agreed with the Rochester *Post Express* that Williams combined "greater intellectual brilliancy with aggressiveness and parliamentary skill than his predecessor," James D. Richardson of Tennessee. The New Orleans *Times-Picayune* spoke encour-

³ William G. Brantley to author, December 18, 1928, in possession of author. Brantley, a member of the House from Georgia, served with Williams from 1897 to 1909.

⁴ Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, November 12, 1903, contains excerpts from a number of newspapers, chiefly throughout the South, commenting on the selection of the new minority leader. See also *Public Opinion*, XXXV (1903), 647, for clippings from other papers, chiefly from the North and East.

agingly to the effect that Williams was sure to become "a sort of post of power and influence." ⁵ Albert Shaw, editor of the *Review of Reviews*, wrote that Williams was "as much admired on the Republican as on the Democratic side of the House." ⁶

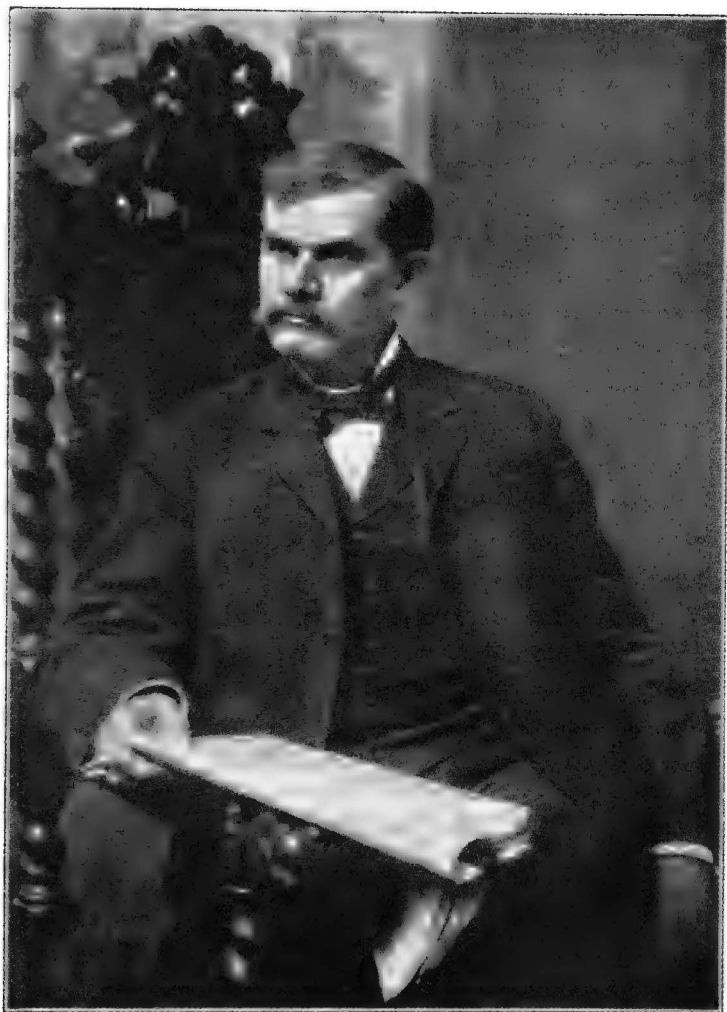
The new leader in his first remarks to the House, after his presentation of the Speaker, stated that in all fairness he believed the Democratic minority should have its representation on several important House committees increased by one because of the added strength of the minority since the former Congress.⁷ This request was later granted by Speaker Cannon.

Williams had no small task on his hands. There were many discordant elements within the Democratic ranks. Currency, imperialism, and protection were only three of the important problems on which there was, or recently had been, a lack of unity among the House Democrats. There was also cause for friction in the pre-caucus campaign for the nomination of minority leader. Although apparently Williams took no part in his selection as minority leader, his friends encountered bitter opposition from the forces of Judge David A. De Armond and Champ Clark. Several of the immediate predecessors of the Mississippian—James D. Richardson, Joseph W. Bailey, and Charles F. Crisp—though able parliamentarians, had, to a certain extent, proved failures as leaders of the minority. The *Review of Reviews* probably expressed the general attitude of the country when it stated that "it is to be hoped that . . . [Williams] may play an important part in helping the Democratic party to a more consistent and unified course

⁵ These excerpts and many others are quoted in *Public Opinion*, XXXV (1903), 647.

⁶ *Review of Reviews*, XXVIII (1903), 651.

⁷ *Cong. Record*, 58 Cong., 1 Sess., 149. The Democratic membership on several committees had been reduced by one member the preceding Congress under the plea that there was such a large number of Republicans in the House that committee assignments could not be found for them.



WILLIAMS AS MINORITY LEADER
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of action than it has been able to pursue within the recent past." ⁸

From November 9, 1903, Williams was determined to be the leader of the minority in reality as well as in title. Although he always assumed the responsibility, the policy of the minority was molded by the consensus of the leaders. There was formed what Williams called the "kitchen cabinet," an inner group whose members were selected at the pleasure of the minority leader. Privately and collectively they met with their leader to plan the strategy of the minority. Williams met them "every week or two and confidentially consulted [them] about the course to be pursued in the House, in order to try to regain for the Democratic party, which at that time was thoroughly disorganized, some degree of cohesion, at any rate, if not the restoration of power." ⁹

After consulting some of the other recognized leaders of his party in the House, Williams decided at once on Cuban reciprocity as the first test of Democratic solidarity. There were Democrats in the House who were strongly in favor of a high tariff against Cuban imports either because of the interest of their constituents in factories that would meet competition from Cuban products or because of interest in raw materials that would suffer from increased importations from this island.¹⁰ Williams remained firm, however, and within five days he had a united minority group voting almost unanimously on a resolution favoring reciprocity.¹¹ It was plain that he took his position seriously and intel-

⁸ *Review of Reviews*, XXVIII (1903), 651.

⁹ Williams to Woodrow Wilson, July 3, 1917, in Williams Papers.

¹⁰ The reduction of duties on sugar and tobacco was probably the hardest obstacle toward unification for the Democrats of the House.

¹¹ Williams had received 167 votes for Speaker. In the vote on a Republican resolution the opposition polled 160 votes, all of which were Democratic. See *Cong. Record*, 58 Cong., 1 Sess., 258. The final vote on H. R. 1921 which carried into effect the convention between the United States and Cuba on December 11, 1902, was opposed by 165 Democrats in the House. The bill passed, however, with a majority of 29. See *ibid.*, 388-89.

lignently. In the course of the debate the members of the minority were bridled in their opposition to the bill but concentrated their attack on a few strategic positions.¹² Such tactics placed the Democrats in a better parliamentary position for future attacks on the political enemy.

Congressman James E. Watson of Indiana, a Republican crony of Cannon, induced "Uncle Joe" to confer upon the minority leader the right to name the minority members to the various committees of the House.¹³ It was no easy task to convince the Speaker of the wisdom of giving any of his power to anyone and especially to the opposition. After several conversations, however, Cannon approved the proposition. Williams immediately accepted the increased control. In delegating this power to Williams, Uncle Joe created a precedent in House procedure. Regarding this practice Speaker Cannon afterward said: "It was well understood between Representative Williams and the then Speaker of the House that he should have his way about minority appointments, and as I recollect now there were not to exceed four cases where the minority leader did not have his way, and in those cases the limitation placed upon him was where the organization of the minority interfered with the organization of the majority for geographic reasons or as a matter of policy."¹⁴ This unusual power thrust into the hands of the minority leader made some trouble for Williams in the future "on account of the pressure for good places by his Democratic friends,"¹⁵ but no doubt the privilege did aid him materially in acquiring and maintaining the real leadership of his party in the House.

Because the trust and the tariff issues were very closely intertwined, Williams often urged the Republican majority

¹² *New York Times*, November 21, 1903.

¹³ James E. Watson, *As I Knew Them* (Indianapolis, 1936), 284-85.

¹⁴ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 2 Sess., 857, quoted by Paul De W. Hasbrouck, *Party Government in the House of Representatives* (New York, 1927), 44-45.

¹⁵ Orlando O. Stealey, *Twenty Years in the Press Gallery* (New York, 1906), 159.

to remove the monopolistic incentive by placing on the free list those articles which were sold by trusts or to reduce the tariff duties to the difference between the foreign price, less the cost of transportation, and the domestic price. President Roosevelt was able to differentiate between beneficial and harmful trusts, but to Williams all trusts were created to make profits by exploiting the public through curtailing competition. Thus, all trusts were bad and should be exterminated.

In 1904 sentiment for tariff revision became general in the South and in the West, where Governor Albert B. Cummins, Republican of Iowa, fostered the "Iowa Idea." Cummins advocated a general reduction of tariff duties with emphasis on those duties which affected agriculture. Others came to adopt this "idea"; even President Roosevelt spoke for downward revision. The Democratic plan for the tariff was gradual revision downward so as not to interfere seriously with business. In the House, Williams introduced several bills for decreasing import duties and for new additions to the free list, all of which were pigeonholed by the Ways and Means Committee on a strictly partisan vote.¹⁶

Four speeches on this question came from the lips of Williams in as many months early in 1904. In one of several articles written for publication the author asserted: "The ultimate goal of Democratic striving is 'tariff for revenue only,' but in the striving toward this goal common sense, good judgment, and conservatism will prevail and time will enter as a factor. . . . 'Democratic tariff for revenue only' would consist in levying import duties upon all, or nearly all, imports, dividing them, however, into three classes: first, necessities of life and necessities of industry; secondly, comforts; and third, luxuries."¹⁷ These views, coming from the minority leader of the House, may be

¹⁶ *Cong. Record*, 58 Cong., 2 Sess., 974-79.

¹⁷ John Sharp Williams, "What Democracy Now Stands For," in *Everybody's Magazine* (New York), X (1904), 181.

safely accepted as the voice of the Democrats in that body and, to some extent, as the attitude of the entire party.

The *New York Times* on January 22 stated that "the minority leader charges the majority party with becoming a party of negation." The Republicans were "standing pat" on all questions, wisely choosing to make the forthcoming campaign on the personality of President Roosevelt. Williams was vainly urging the political enemy to action on tariff revision, reciprocity, and other public issues. A daily observer from the press gallery wrote that "Williams had already determined that tariff revision should be the Democratic watchword."¹⁸

The *Nation* devoted almost a column to Williams' attack on the "stand-pat" policy of the opposition, saying in regard to his power to meet antagonists: "It stamps the Democratic leader of the House as a debater of remarkably tough fibre, as one who has both his facts and his wits under perfect control. He placed his Republican antagonists in the attitude commonly known as that of a 'stuck pig'; having put the knife into them up to the hilt, he proceeded to turn the handle."¹⁹

By the close of the first session in which Williams served as leader of the minority, he had apparently won a conspicuous place in the regard of the country. No Democratic minority leader, a correspondent wrote, had become in so short a time "so well, widely, and favorably known as the Representative from the Eighth Mississippi District." Because Williams was "loyal, generous, sympathetic, cheerful, and patient under the burdens of responsibility to his friends, he has knit and bound the minority to him by exceptional ties of devotion and implicit trust in his integrity, his judgment, and his resourcefulness."²⁰ The *World's*

¹⁸ Charles W. Thompson, *Party Leaders of the Time* (New York, 1906), 187.

¹⁹ *Nation*, LXXVIII (1904), 79-80.

²⁰ Robert H. Watkins, "Personal Sketch of the Minority Leader in the House" in *Harper's Weekly* (New York), XLVIII (1904), 970.

Work noted that Williams had shown good sense on important questions, and believed that he would win "the esteem of the majority of the whole country."²¹

That Williams gained almost, but not quite, complete control of the minority during his first session as its leader is attested by the members of the House and by the press of the country. The *Outlook* stated that he had "supplied what his party has for years sorely lacked—sane, competent direction."²² A Republican member of the House, Philip P. Campbell of Kansas, believed that Williams was "able in his leadership" and that he had "under perfect control the minority of this House."²³ A daily occupant of a seat in the press gallery wrote that "it took Williams five days to turn the mob into the army it now is—an army at present better drilled and disciplined than the Republican majority."²⁴ Edward M. Kingsbury wrote for the *Bookman* that Williams had "breathed into the Democrats of the House a spirit of discipline, [and] of common intention."²⁵ Congressmen arrived in Washington with speeches on the tariff and other current problems which were never delivered because the note struck was discordant with the wishes of the minority leadership.²⁶

There were two types of leadership, the persuasive and the domineering. Williams was by nature of the former type. Democratic colleagues would often go to Williams' little room in the library wing of the Capitol, determined to have some problem out with him, but would "go forth pleased and flattered and inclined to help him out." As the *New York Times* asserted, Williams had the knack of being able to appear to be seeking help and light from a colleague when at that very time he was bringing the would-be dis-

²¹ *World's Work* (New York), VII (1904), 4284.

²² *Outlook* (New York), LXXVII (1904), 3.

²³ *Cong. Record*, 58 Cong., 2 Sess., 3939.

²⁴ Thompson, *Party Leaders of the Time*, 186.

²⁵ Edward M. Kingsbury, "John Sharp Williams, Leader," in *Bookman* (New York), XIX (1904), 171.

²⁶ *New York Times*, March 14, 1904.

cordant around to his views.²⁷ On rare occasions, however, Williams showed his authority; "the iron hand came out of the velvet glove" and the insurgent would know what had happened "without having anyone to tell him."²⁸ A colleague believed Williams to be "tactful in his leadership," able, and possessed of a fairness which "commanded the respect of both sides of the House."²⁹ A Republican member wrote that "while strenuously insisting upon the rights of the minority, Williams was considered by the majority as playing the game fairly."³⁰ When Congress adjourned on April 28, the session had made the impression on the country of Republican discomfort and Democratic triumph.³¹

Although mentioned in the *New York Times*³² and several southern papers as a possible candidate for the vice-presidential nomination, Williams deprecated "any attempt to nominate a Southern man upon the National Democratic ticket." From his plantation home he urged harmonious action among the various factions of the party.³³

When the state Democratic convention met in Jackson on June 14, Williams had a plan for it to follow and a platform for it to adopt. A leading state daily urged the convention to "follow his wish in every direction as to the platform and instructions as a testimonial of what the Democrats of his state think of him."³⁴ Senator Hernando D. Money on

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Thompson, *Party Leaders of the Time*, 189.

²⁹ William G. Brantley to author, December 18, 1928, in possession of author.

³⁰ John S. Esch to author, December 1, 1928, in possession of author. Esch, a Republican from Wisconsin, sat with Williams in the House for ten years, 1899-1909.

³¹ *New York Times*, April 29, 1904.

³² *Ibid.*, July 6, 1904. "It would be wise for the Democratic Party and good for the country to nominate John Sharp Williams for the vice-presidency. It would break at last and forever the tradition that a Southern man should not be named for the suffrage of the whole nation. . . . His nomination would serve notice from the Democratic Party that statesmanship, political ability, and sound character are desirable qualifications for the vice-presidency."

³³ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, May 6, 1904.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, June 8, 1904.

the floor of the convention opposed, but not forcefully, the adoption of a resolution instructing the delegates to the national convention to vote for Judge Alton B. Parker of New York. All opposition disappeared when Williams made an hour-long speech. The convention unanimously instructed for Parker.³⁵ The minority leader, as chairman of the Resolutions Committee, reported the platform which he had penned before the convention met. This document, which was of a conservative nature, was adopted with little debate.³⁶

Because of his success in the House, Williams was selected temporary chairman of the Democratic National Convention. Perhaps he would have preferred the chairmanship of the Committee on Resolutions,³⁷ as he had been working for several months to secure the adoption of his own ideas in the platform of the party. Senator Arthur P. Gorman of Maryland also wished the place at the head of the Resolutions Committee. Neither was chosen for this position, but Williams was triumphant in his rivalry with Senator Gorman to the extent that his views were followed by the national convention.

The temporary chairman's keynote speech before the convention was "stupendously long . . . which while amusing in parts distinctly fatigued the assembled delegates."³⁸ A historian of the period, John H. Latané, described the oration as a "long speech, clever, sarcastic, ironical, but lacking in the element of constructive leadership."³⁹ To be sure, Champ Clark, who became permanent chairman, afterward

³⁵ *Ibid.*, June 16, 1904.

³⁶ *New York Times*, June 16, 1904.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, July 3, 1904.

³⁸ Nicholas Murray Butler, "Across the Busy Years—Fourteen Republican Conventions," *Scribner's* (New York), XCIX (1936), 79.

³⁹ Latané, *America as a World Power*, 231. George Gunton, writing in *Gunton's Magazine* (New York), XXVII (1904), 132, said of Williams' St. Louis speech: "In spots it was bright and sometimes acute, but it was flippant and shallow throughout." *New York World*, July 7, 1904, said: "Mr. Williams has made a sensible appeal to the sensible citizenship. It is a good beginning of a promising convention."

wrote that Williams performed his task of outlining the issues of the campaign "with great *éclat*";⁴⁰ and the reading of the speech, said the *New York Times*, was a pleasure which no sensible man could forego and a duty which no candid American could without reproach neglect.⁴¹ But years later Williams himself admitted that he "fell down" as temporary chairman.⁴²

Attired in a gray suit with white waistcoat, the keynoter without gestures calmly began to deliver his address. He spoke with difficulty, as the aisles were packed by a dense throng, and constant conversation smothered his voice. At the mention of Grover Cleveland's name a demonstration began which lasted for eight minutes. The party which had deserted the President in 1896 and had insulted him in 1900, "burst into applause which lasted so long that the speaker had twice to take his seat before it subsided."⁴³ Williams was not happy over the tempest he had evoked. He "stuck a cigar fiercely into his mouth, grabbed the gavel, and hammered and banged like a blacksmith, but without the slightest avail."⁴⁴ He made the mistake of getting into direct conversation with delegates and people in the gallery. Apparently he became quite annoyed and perhaps lost his temper. As he reached the close of his address, he said: "Now a few words in conclusion, and if you are as pleased to hear that conclusion as I am to conclude, this will be the most delighted audience that ever existed."⁴⁵ The temporary chairman, greatly exhausted, spoke a few more words and then closed his address. The perspiration was streaming from his face, his collar was a soft roll of white linen, and

⁴⁰ Clark, *My Quarter Century of American Politics*, II, 139.

⁴¹ *New York Times*, July 7, 1904.

⁴² Williams to author, June 29, 1932, in possession of author. There was a story to account for it, which Williams promised to tell, but before the author had the privilege of a visit, death had silenced his voice and the story was never told.

⁴³ McElroy, *Grover Cleveland*, II, 340.

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, July 7, 1904.

⁴⁵ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, July 7, 1904.

his voice was worn to a whisper which could not be heard twenty feet from where he stood.⁴⁶

Williams was a member of the subcommittee on resolutions at the national convention; after working for nearly thirty-six consecutive hours, he succeeded in having the Mississippi platform adopted almost *in toto* as the national platform. The result was the most direct and conclusive platform that could have been placed in a conscientious way before the people.⁴⁷ Two notable planks drafted by the Committee on Resolutions were omitted. One of these advocated an income tax. The other was a financial plank, prepared by Williams, which read in part: "The discoveries of gold within the last few years, and the greatly increased production . . . have contributed to the maintenance of a money standard of values no longer open to question, removing that issue from the field of political contention."⁴⁸

Because of the silence of the platform on the gold standard, Judge Parker, after his nomination for the Presidency, sent a wire to the convention, stating that the gold standard was "certainly and irrevocably established."⁴⁹ He very courageously let his opinion be known so that if it were not acceptable to the convention, another candidate could be selected before adjournment. Williams, Governor James K. Vardaman, Senator Benjamin R. Tillman, and Senator Edward W. Carmack were selected to present the telegram to

⁴⁶ From Nantucket, Lodge wrote Roosevelt on July 9, 1904: "I am amused to see that Williams in his very cheap and violent speech attacked us both furiously by name for the suffrage plank which neither of us wanted and which was put in over our heads, but we have to stand for it and take the abuse." Henry Cabot Lodge (ed.), *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1918* (New York, 1925), II, 87.

⁴⁷ Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, February 7, 1917.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Latané, *America as a World Power*, 232. The eastern Democrats led by Hill of New York were responsible for the first omission, while William Jennings Bryan placed the seal of doom on the currency plank.

⁴⁹ Alton B. Parker to W. F. Sheehan, July 9, 1904, quoted in New York *Times*, July 10, 1904.

the convention. They made their way to the platform with the mysterious message in their possession. After reading it, Williams criticized the supersensitiveness of the nominee. The Committee on Resolutions had purposely remained silent on the currency question, because all had agreed that it was not an issue in the convention. Worn to the limit of endurance in the committee, Williams had exclaimed: "Gentlemen, we can never get together; let us omit the mention of money. Let us go back to the Convention and report a platform freed completely of this troublesome question."⁵⁰ Committee colleagues had accepted Williams' dictum, issued on the floor of the House in January, that the silver and gold controversy had been relegated to the past. Accepting this view, the convention drafted a telegram in reply to the presidential nominee, but Bryan persistently urged a vote upon a gold standard amendment. This persistence aroused Williams' anger. He told Bryan that, despite the latter's protests, he was the one man in the convention who sought to prevent harmony.⁵¹ Bryan failed in his attempt to secure a vote on the amendment, and finally withdrew it in the interest of peace. Apparently he was discredited on several occasions by the action of the convention.

As temporary chairman of the national convention, Williams was chairman of the vice-presidential notification committee. The ceremonial meeting at White Sulphur Springs on August 17 was like a "gathering of old friends rather than a political assemblage."⁵² Williams' speech formally notifying Henry Gassaway Davis of his nomination seemed to have made a better impression on the country than the keynote address delivered at the convention.⁵³ He entitled it: "A Disquisition Upon Some of the Blunders of

⁵⁰ Charles M. Pepper, *The Life and Times of Henry Gassaway Davis, 1823-1916* (New York, 1920), 170.

⁵¹ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, July 10, 1904.

⁵² *Washington Post*, August 18, 1904.

⁵³ Pepper, *Life and Times of Henry Gassaway Davis*, 176.

Our Ancestors; Viewed from the Standpoint of the Wisdom of Our Republican Statesmen, who Have Embraced the Strenuous Life." The speech was well over an hour in length, and its tone was predominantly sarcastic.

Later, Williams grew fond of telling several humorous incidents that happened in connection with this trip. Before he left Yazoo City, Williams had said he was going to White Sulphur Springs to notify the vice-presidential candidate of his nomination. A little nephew remarked: "Uncle John, he must be a mighty big goose if he hasn't heard it already." When Williams arrived in White Sulphur Springs, a large crowd of people met the train. After a round of formal introductions he invited some friends to his room. "I want to meet John Sharp Williams," said a clergyman in the group as they climbed the stairs. He had not heard Williams' name when they were introduced; when he was told that he had already met the distinguished guest, he was aghast: "Oh, what a mistake I made! I thought he was the station agent there." ⁵⁴

It was in this campaign that Mr. Dooley wrote indirectly of the Democratic loyalty of Williams and his fellow townsmen at Yazoo City: "Th' consarvative business man who thinks that if a little money cud be placed in Yazoo City th' prejudice again' th' Raypublicans, which is on'y skin-deep annyhow, cud be removed, hasn't turned up at headquarters." ⁵⁵

While speaking in the Northwest and the East in such metropolitan centers as Detroit and New York during the campaign, Williams was not deceived as to the outcome. En route home to vote he told a reporter that the Democrats had "no more chance of winning the election than a snowball had of staying in the lower regions." ⁵⁶ In a speech some weeks later he gave the causes of the Democratic defeat as

⁵⁴ *Washington Post*, August 18, 1904.

⁵⁵ [Finley P. Dunne], *Dissertations of Mr. Dooley* (New York, 1908), 200.

⁵⁶ *Jackson Daily Clarion-Ledger*, November 4, 1904.

the association by many people of the Democratic party with panic and poverty and of the Republican party with prosperity and plenty, the recrudescence of sectionalism by reducing representation of the South in Congress and in the Electoral College, the use of money subscribed by corporations, the popularity of Roosevelt, and the lynching of Negroes at Statesboro, Georgia.

The House of Representatives in the Fifty-eighth Congress, 1903-1905, was noted for being amiable and harmonious. The impelling force toward such a desirable state of affairs was the warm personal friendship between the minority leader and the Speaker. "The mutual admiration and esteem between the two has even been a subject of comment in the House."⁵⁷ At the close of the first session in which these men were opposing leaders, "John" was eulogizing "Joe" for the latter's genial humor. Williams convulsed the House and the crowded galleries by relating a conversation which he had with the Speaker. During the conference John had said: "Mr. Speaker, I will always think you are fair as I believe you will be." Joe replied, "John, I'm going to be as fair as I can consistent with the exigencies of American politics."⁵⁸ Upon one occasion in the heat of an argument between these men, "John" addressing "Joe" said, "We are just 'reasoning together in brotherly love.'"⁵⁹ A number of such manifestations of the personal friendship between these two men could be given. One somewhat rhetorical student of House proceedings has written descriptively that, as they engaged "in partisan encounters, when the eye sparkled, retorts rankled, and the firm mouth-muscles moved slowly, an occasional smile dissipated the thought that superheated zeal had buried friendship."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ C. Arthur Williams, "John Sharp Williams," in Stealey, *Twenty Years in the Press Gallery*, 471.

⁵⁸ *New York Times*, April 29, 1904.

⁵⁹ *Cong. Record*, 58 Cong., 2 Sess., 5035.

⁶⁰ De Alva Stanwood Alexander, *History and Procedure of the House*

In the short session of 1904-1905 a reform revenue bill of an administrative nature was placed before the House by Ebenezer J. Hill of Connecticut. He predicted aright when he stated that "the argument will be brought forward that . . . [the bill] will permit the deposit of more money in the national banks." This argument Hill thought to be of little weight because government deposits were then being withdrawn faster than they were increased.⁶¹ To Williams, the amount of government money thus deposited did not make "a particle of difference"; it was the principle of the thing that was wrong in his judgment. "Governmentally speaking," exclaimed Williams, "it is absolutely immoral" to deposit money in national banks for a long period without interest. States were given interest on their deposits in banks. The banks were willing to give interest for the use of government money. Furthermore, the Treasury in lending this money had no "fixed prescription of law" by which it was done. Thus, the government was interfering with private schemes, and the Secretary of the Treasury could at his discretion grant favoritism in the placement of these deposits.⁶² Williams concluded this argument as follows: "It is well to stick to firm fundamental principles. It is well to remember what the Government has the right to do and what the Government has not the right to do, and I now raise my voice in protest against . . . the existing iniquitous wrong which consists in lending to one class, the surplus money in the Treasury without interest."⁶³

Williams had a plan to offer which he deemed constructive. He proposed to require interest through competitive bidding on all money deposited by the government in all national banks.⁶⁴ By this amendment he hoped to allocate

of *Representatives* (New York, 1916), 209. This friendship for "Uncle Joe" apparently made Williams unpopular with some of the Democrats. See Harold B. Hinton, *Cordell Hull, A Biography* (Garden City, N.Y., 1942), 118.

⁶¹ *Cong. Record*, 58 Cong., 3 Sess., 169.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 179.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 323.

the money to the parts of the country that were developing most rapidly with productive enterprise instead of having it used in the great financial centers for speculative purposes.⁶⁵ He had urged this financial reform in the long session of 1903-1904, but no bill or amendment had been placed before the House.⁶⁶

Charles N. Fowler of New Jersey favored fixing the rate of interest with the purpose of making business more stable.⁶⁷ Williams thought it better to permit business to fix the rate of interest "by free and voluntary competitive offerings."⁶⁸ A Democratic member from New York, William B. Cockran, spoke in complimentary terms: "The amendment of the gentleman from Mississippi points you to exact and equal justice. It points you to sound banking, to sound morality."⁶⁹ The House adopted this piece of legislation without a roll call.⁷⁰ Several other amendments were voted on, some favorably, but a final roll call on the bill was not reached.

The final adjournment of the Fifty-eighth Congress came on March 4, 1905, as Theodore Roosevelt began his second administration as President. In the House the customary resolution of appreciation to the Speaker for his services was reinforced by the presentation of a magnificent loving cup. Williams was selected to make the presentation. In the course of his remarks the minority leader stated that he wished "the mere spontaneous thought and intent of friends, without the intervention of money, could originate things as beautiful." He told the Speaker that the cup would be a pleasure to him because it was an expression of appreciation and because it would remind him of the truth of the saying, "'He that showeth himself friendly has friends.'" ⁷¹

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 327. New York held on deposit in government money \$42,739,000, of which \$39,000,000 was in New York City; Philadelphia had \$4,900,000; Chicago had \$2,800,000; Alabama had \$429,000; Mississippi had \$349,000; and Louisiana had over \$800,000.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 Sess., 1347.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 502.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 656.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 3 Sess., 493-94.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 658.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 4039.

When Uncle Joe had concluded the few remarks of acceptance which followed amid the tumultuous applause of the House and galleries, Champ Clark gained the floor for a similar presentation to the Democratic leader.⁷² Inscribed on the loving cup given to the minority leader were these words: "Presented to the Honorable John Sharp Williams by the Democrats in the Fifty-eighth Congress as a token of appreciation of his masterly leadership."⁷³ In presenting the cup Clark said: "We give it to him because of his great capacity, which all men admire; because of his courage, characteristic of his race; because of his tact, which has served us and the country well; because of his scholarship, which delights all who hear him; but above all, greater than all, because of our great personal affection for him."

Williams, in reply, said that he would derive increasing pleasure from the knowledge that he had "measurably well succeeded" in doing the will of the minority. Proceeding, he stated that the world was too broad to forget that a man was not measured by his professional, religious, or political occupation, but "by his heart and good will, by his sincere efforts to do right."⁷⁴ An observer from the press gallery noticed that as the members were crowding about their colleagues to say goodbye and godspeed for the vacation, there was a little procession of Republicans who went over to Williams and paid him the "homage of praise for a brave, honest, and manly foe. 'We are all proud of you,' one of them said. And the object of this tribute of manliness to manliness bent his head and blushed like a schoolgirl."⁷⁵

During the session of 1904-1905 a number of bills proposing to put more teeth into the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887 were introduced in the House. They were referred to the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. In

⁷² *Ibid.*, 4040.

⁷³ Until Williams' death the beautiful cup rested on a table in the center of his library at Cedar Grove Plantation.

⁷⁴ *Cong. Record*, 58 Cong., 3 Sess., 4040-41.

⁷⁵ Watkins, "John Sharp Williams," in *loc. cit.*, 971.

the Democratic caucus it was agreed that the minority members of this committee should support the Davey bill. Despite the caucus action William B. Lamar of Florida and Dorsey W. Shackleford of Missouri, two minority members of the committee, supported the Hearst bill in the committee room and reported it upon the floor. Thus, the minority reported two bills. Williams considered the actions of these two members a breach of party fealty. In the Democratic caucus he had stated that he earnestly desired a unanimous report from their side of the committee.

William R. Hearst complained in his numerous newspapers that his interstate commerce bill did not receive a fair consideration in the House and blamed Williams for this lack of fairness. There was no friendship whatever between the two men, and apparently the editor permitted his personal dislike for Williams to dominate his actions in this case. The Davey bill had been agreed upon by a majority vote in the Democratic caucus, which would seem to indicate that the problem was settled in an equitable way. During the months between the Fifty-eighth and Fifty-ninth Congresses, Lamar was quoted in a Washington newspaper as substantiating Hearst's statements. Williams, at Cedar Grove, wrote Lamar asking him to correct his statements.⁷⁶ This, Lamar refused to do.

Williams then determined at the beginning of the Fifty-ninth Congress to remove both Lamar and Shackleford from the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee so that he could secure "a team that would pull together." There happened to be two minority places vacant on the Committee on Foreign Affairs—a committee of perhaps equal importance with the committee on which they were then serving. Williams offered these two places to Lamar and Shackleford, but both refused and expressed a desire to remain where they were.⁷⁷ The announcement of Demo-

⁷⁶ Williams to William B. Lamar, October 12, 1905, in *Cong. Record*, 59 Cong., 1 Sess., 355.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 351-52.

cratic committee assignments by the Speaker revealed that both had been transferred to other posts.⁷⁸

Immediately Lamar sprang up and requested the floor on personal privilege. Amid the shouts for regular order, Williams arose from his place near the back of the room and walked briskly down the aisle, gesticulating as he advanced to secure the attention of the Speaker, who recognized him as he walked by Lamar. He then turned and faced Lamar with a smile and said that in the interest of Democratic harmony and effectiveness, he objected. Lamar, trembling with anger as Williams returned to his seat in the rear of the chamber, demanded a Democratic caucus.⁷⁹ Several Democratic and Republican members were on their feet again clamoring for regular order. The Speaker finally recognized Sereno E. Payne, a Republican member, who moved to adjourn. The motion was carried, and the House adjourned after a session lasting only fifty-five minutes. Williams refused to discuss the bitter remarks which Lamar had made against him after he returned to his seat. He said only, "The world is full of men who can say sharp things. The trouble is that there are so few who are wise enough to know when not to say them."⁸⁰

Two days later, while the Committee of the Whole was discussing the distribution of the annual message of the President, Lamar secured the recognition of the chairman and immediately launched into the task of washing "the Democratic linen before the Republican House" and the country. Lamar took the attitude that he was acting within his liberty in reporting and supporting the Hearst bill, that no party pledge had been broken, and that Williams had no moral right to remove him from the committee. Williams contended that with each Congress every committee was *tabula rasa*. He assumed complete responsibility for all minority committee appointments which had been made

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 297-99.

⁷⁹ *New York Times*, December 12, 1905.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

and stated that what had been done was, he thought, for the best interest of the Democratic party. He closed his remarks with a plea for harmony within the Democratic ranks so that the opposition could be fought by a unified minority at all times in the House.⁸¹

The Republicans were hilarious and delighted at the prolonged "animal show" of the Democrats. Watson wrote that every night when he and Uncle Joe reached their apartment, the Speaker would chuckle and say: "Well, Jim, you certainly proposed a hot one when you suggested that Williams be permitted to name the Democratic members of the committees." ⁸²

Failing in his efforts to secure any tariff reform in the session of 1903-1904, Williams reintroduced practically the same bills in the session of 1905-1906; again they failed to emerge from the Ways and Means Committee room. Several times the Democratic plea for tariff revision was placed before the House and country by the Mississippian in the months just preceding the Congressional election of 1906. In the midst of one of these speeches, as arguments were being advanced against the high tariff schedules, Representative Augustus P. Gardner of Massachusetts asked the minority leader if he believed in Santa Claus. When the universal laughter of the House subsided Williams retorted: "I do, in a way. I believe in it just as I believe in the New England fetich that the Republican party will revise the tariff. I think that Santa Claus is a very useful cult among children to encourage faith, and I believe the Massachusetts Republican reliance in the junior Senator from Massachusetts and in yourself and in the entire Republican Congressional representation to revise the tariff is an awfully useful cult to encourage Republican voters, who seem to be as full of credulity as children are at Christmas, to

⁸¹ *Cong. Record*, 59 Cong., 1 Sess., 353. Clark, *My Quarter Century of American Politics*, II, 264 ff., gives a good summary of this difficulty.

⁸² Watson, *As I Knew Them*, 286.

remain 'in line.' " ⁸³ Needless to say, the member from Massachusetts thereafter seemed willing for the "gentleman from Mississippi" to express his opinions on any measure unmolested.

Friday and Saturday, April 27 and 28, 1906, the House listened to the last extended speech of Williams on the tariff question. It was one of the best performances on this issue. For four hours he gave the protectionist arguments, then in his sincere and logical manner gave the antiprotectionist refutations.⁸⁴ Two very unfavorable conditions—the phenomenal growth of trusts and the sale of their products abroad cheaper than on the domestic market—were brought again before the House and the country. These evils were accredited to the system of protectionism. Watches—2,300 of them had been bought recently from the Elgin Watch Company, ostensibly to be sold in France, but they were exported and then shipped back to the United States, paying the import duty. They were then sold in New York at a lower price than that at which the domestic retailer who bought similar watches at home was allowed to sell them. Steel rails which had been manufactured in the United States were sold in Canada and Mexico cheaper than in the United States. "Let me tell you something," cried Williams, shaking his index finger at the Republican side, "you have got to revise this tariff. If you don't, we will. Because our common masters, the people of America, have made up their minds that it shall be revised." ⁸⁵

Throughout Williams' career of nearly sixteen years in the House, he did not deviate from his firm belief in tariff for revenue only. Such a tariff would place a small tax on the vast majority of our imported products. He expressed disapproval of free trade. But protectionism, to Williams, was prostituting the taxing power of the government for

⁸³ *Cong. Record*, 59 Cong., 1 Sess., 3418-19.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 6017-26, 6058-76.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 6023.

the prosperity of the few, and as such, was "immoral, socialistic, and wrong." His consistency and very nature led him "to denounce plunder even when its profits seemed to be flowing towards his own pocket." When asked by Henry S. Boutell if he, being a cotton farmer, would not favor a protective tariff on his product, Williams replied: "Do you think I would rob all the poor sewing women and all the dentists and all the bricklayers and all the carpenters of this country to put money into my pocket or the pocket of my constituents? If you do, you mistake me."⁸⁶

Not once did this man publicly criticize or rebuke any of his Democratic comrades for advocating protection on sugar, cotton, lumber, coal, iron, or manufactured articles, nor for favoring free trade. He did often try to convince by logical arguments the few party colleagues who he thought had strayed from the straight and narrow path.

In the Fifty-eighth Congress the minority led by Williams turned against him in only one instance. When a naval appropriation bill that provided for the retirement of a group of officers with pay was up for consideration, Williams favored the granting of pensions. His fellow Democrats opposed the pensioning of General Nelson A. Miles, for he had been in charge of Jefferson Davis during his imprisonment at Fortress Monroe, and upon the orders of his superior officer, Charles A. Dana, Assistant Secretary of War, had placed Davis in chains. Williams knew these facts, but stated that the South did not show its resentment of past injustice by doing such little things as cutting the retirement pay of a man who was acting under orders from his superior officer. The stand of Williams was defeated,⁸⁷ and he went to his home determined to resign. Three days later he agreed to retain the leadership and admitted that perhaps he had misjudged his colleagues.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 6021.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 58 Cong., 3 Sess., 1648. See *Natchez Daily Democrat*, February 1, 8, 1905, for discussions.

Shortly before the beginning of the Fifty-ninth and Sixtieth Congresses there were discussions of opposition to Williams for re-election to the minority leadership. Clark could not be induced to action at either time but De Armond was willing and anxious on each occasion. Some few did not like the methods of party control and discipline that the Mississippian had invoked at the beginning of his leadership. Strict obedience had been required, but a record of unusual success had resulted. The minority had forced the majority to act in some cases, and in others had brought measures before the country through discussion in Congress. The anti-Williams revolts always failed because they were founded chiefly "on nothing but personal grudges and offended pride with a seasoning of Hearst influence."⁸⁸ The loud talk always ended at the caucus door.

Before he became minority leader, Williams had determined to use his influence to change the general attitude of the Democratic party. Too much emphasis, he thought, had been given merely to destructive criticism of the Republican program and to the retention of antique issues. In fact, some were speaking of the Democratic party as the party of negation only.⁸⁹ The party was too well content merely to "view with alarm." Williams would have the minority formulate a constructive and progressive policy in order to present an attractive program to the independent voter. In speaking of the reconstruction of the Democratic party, he said: "I believe that the greatest constructive party that this country has ever seen, which ruled it for forty or fifty years in glory and in justice and in honesty, is capable of ruling it in glory and justice and honesty again."⁹⁰

Williams published an article entitled "What Democracy Now Stands For" in the February, 1904, issue of *Everybody's Magazine*. It contained not only criticism of Repub-

⁸⁸ *New York Times*, February 25, 1907.

⁸⁹ *Cong. Record*, 58 Cong., 3 Sess., 1414. Charles F. Scott, a Republican of Kansas, made this statement. Others may be found in the *Cong. Record*.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 60 Cong., 1 Sess., 1549.

lican measures, but it also advocated Democratic action on interstate commerce, depositing of government money in national banks, a Nicaraguan canal, and tariff revision by piecemeal if general revision were impossible.⁹¹ Later in the campaign a somewhat similar article by the same author, "Why Should a Man Vote the Democratic Ticket This Year?" appeared in the *Independent*.⁹²

During the spring of 1906 the leadership of the minority in the House was actively demanding reforms. At times the Democrats in the House were much more in sympathy with the White House than was the controlling element in the Republican majority. Besides urging tariff reform, as has just been noted, Williams was active in the promotion of legislation to rid the national transportation system of some of its evils. Not only were conferences held and speeches made on the floor, but an article was published. Authority to speak for the party was assumed when Williams wrote "The Democratic Party and the Railroad Question" for the *Independent*.⁹³ In the autumn before the Congressional election, he delivered many speeches in the states from Maryland northward. A progressive reform note was struck on every occasion.

As further evidence of an aggressive attitude and constructive policy on the part of the minority, Williams in the regular session of 1907-1908 began an unusual legislative procedure. The Republicans, and the press to a great extent, termed the action of the minority a filibuster, but Williams as spokesman for the group said that they were trying to focus the country's attention upon, and arouse public opinion against, the inaction of the Republican majority in the House. He further stated that no minority could be guilty of filibustering when it furnished at each

⁹¹ John Sharp Williams, "What Democracy Stands For," in *loc. cit.*, 180-84.

⁹² John Sharp Williams, "Why Should a Man Vote the Democratic Ticket This Year?" *Independent* (New York, Boston), LVII (1904), 964-67.

⁹³ John Sharp Williams, "The Democratic Party and the Railroad Question," *ibid.*, LX (1906), 485-88.

daily session of the House more than its share of a quorum.⁹⁴ The Constitution, Article I, Section 5, provided that one fifth of the members present on the floor of the House might demand the yeas and nays upon any question. Williams announced to the House that the minority would use its constitutional rights in demanding roll calls "upon every affirmative matter of legislation" and would refuse unanimous consent to legislation "until the majority shows that it is alive to the demands of the country sufficiently to report for consideration in this House" four specific bills.⁹⁵ As De Alva S. Alexander correctly asserted in his *History and Procedure of the House of Representatives*: "Williams did not expect to breach [the Reed Rules]. . . . He sought to create a campaign issue, and he hoped . . . to arouse national attention and interest."⁹⁶

The measures desired by the Democrats were the following: an employers' liability bill, a publicity of campaign contributions bill, a bill for the free importation of wood pulp and print paper, and a bill limiting the use of injunctions.⁹⁷ The minority leader sought "to compel a reluctant majority to take up those matters of business that had been generally regarded as belonging to the session's program."⁹⁸ The Jackson *Daily News* was sure that the minority would "get publicity because papers and magazines were interested" in the removal of tariff duties on wood pulp and print paper.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ *Cong. Record*, 60 Cong., 1 Sess., 4354.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3823. Samuel W. McCall, a Republican member from Maine, erroneously wrote that Williams "avowed the purpose of forcing the majority to pass certain bills which he desired enacted." See Samuel W. McCall, *The Business of Congress* (New York, 1911), 88-91. Williams several times during the rest of the session spoke of the policy of the minority; and he, without exception, said the object was to force a vote in the House upon the measures. If the Republicans defeated the bills, then the Democrats would go to the country in the approaching election a few months away.

⁹⁶ Alexander, *History and Procedure of the House of Representatives*, 208.

⁹⁷ *Cong. Record*, 60 Cong., 1 Sess., 3823. Quoted by McCall, *Business of Congress*, 32-91.

⁹⁸ *Review of Reviews*, XXXVII (1908), 519.

⁹⁹ Jackson *Daily News*, March 28, 1908.

The majority party lost no time in throttling the aggressive actions of the minority. It was to be expected that the Republicans would retaliate by also refusing unanimous consent. They did not stop there, however, but resorted to other tactics. They held caucus meetings regularly in which agreements were made upon pending legislation and House procedure. As a result of these agreements, amendments from the Senate or from a House committee were accepted or rejected en bloc.

Several special resolutions were reported from the Rules Committee, which was dominated by Speaker Cannon, and adopted by the House.¹⁰⁰ These were the most stringent rules ever resorted to by "Czar" Cannon.¹⁰¹ The resolutions "aimed at reducing the number of divisions that could be called for." A recess motion was made a privileged motion in order that a legislative day might be continuous, thus avoiding the daily reading and acceptance of the journal. The Speaker was given the power to declare the House in Committee of the Whole; and the chairman of this committee could, from time to time, declare the committee in recess. General appropriation bills were passed under suspension of the rules by a majority vote.¹⁰²

The last of the Rules Committee's resolutions, brought before the House on April 20, provided that any day for the rest of the session might be "suspension day" instead of the first and third Mondays of each month (as was customary in the House) and that the action to suspend the rules might pass by a majority instead of a two-thirds vote. This resolution was passed, as were its predecessors, by a partisan

¹⁰⁰ Williams and De Armond, minority members, were not called to the meetings of the Rules Committee. Once when asked if he were not a member of the Rules Committee, Williams drawled, "Yes, nominally. . . . I am invited to the seance, but I am never consulted about the spiritualistic appearances." See *New York Times*, March 7, 1906.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, April 5, 1908.

¹⁰² *Cong. Record*, 60 Cong., 1 Sess., from March 26 until April 19. For a summary of these resolutions, see Hubert B. Fuller, *The Speakers of the House* (Boston, 1909), 258.

vote.¹⁰³ Plainly, all three resolutions were designed to augment the control of the majority over the House at the expense of the minority. In reality they increased the Speaker's power at the expense of both majority and minority members. Williams noted this condition: "We have finally gotten to the point where the procedures of this House lie within the secret conscience of the Speaker. There is no duty any more for him to communicate his reasons, his motives, or his rulings to the House."¹⁰⁴ The minority leader had evolved a system whereby he could wield his party in the House as a unit and the Speaker had accomplished the same thing in regard to the majority.¹⁰⁵ Caucus procedure and rules for both groups had eliminated individual initiative and, therefore, the freedom of the House to legislate. Williams' lockstep system was as effective as that of Cannon.¹⁰⁶

The opposition in the House was clamoring for the party in power to consider various measures. The Republicans were saying by their inactivity—"after the election." This implied answer reminded the minority leader of a little piece of poetry which he recited jocularly:

"When I asked my girl to marry me, she said,

'Go to Father.'

She knew that I knew that her father was dead;

She knew that I knew what a life he had led;

She knew that I knew what she meant when she said,

'Go to Father.' "¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ *Cong. Record*, 60 Cong., 1 Sess., 4978-79. These resolutions are partly quoted in McCall, *Business of Congress*, 89-90.

¹⁰⁴ *Cong. Record*, 60 Cong., 1 Sess., 4976.

¹⁰⁵ Speaker Cannon and his four lieutenants in charge of the all-powerful committees were in complete control of the House. See "Speaker Cannon and the Complete Destruction of Popular Rule in the House of Representatives," *Arena* (Boston), XL (1908), 89-91. B. O. Flower was editor of the *Arena*.

¹⁰⁶ When the majority, swimming in the same current, did the same thing, a minority, though acting as one man, could do nothing but protest until a combination of insurgent Republicans with Democrats arose in revolution and overthrew the system, partly in 1909, but mainly in 1910-1911.

¹⁰⁷ *Cong. Record*, 60 Cong., 1 Sess., 4355.

At least once during this period of militant policy by the minority the friendship of Williams and Cannon suffered a temporary collapse. On April 18, 1908, Speaker Cannon declared the House adjourned at eighteen minutes after six o'clock when minority leader Williams was actually on his feet demanding a division on the motion to adjourn.¹⁰⁸ The Speaker then "left his desk and walked down the aisle towards Williams . . . and when Uncle Joe extended his hand to Mr. Williams, the latter looking the speaker in the face, ignored the proffered hand and turning abruptly on his heels, he marched off to his committee room." The angered minority leader was quoted as saying that the Speaker "had exceeded his constitutional authority by declaring the House in recess" in such a manner, and furthermore that he "resented such treatment from the Speaker and would insist on his rights as a member of the House, both for himself and his colleagues."¹⁰⁹ Clark in his reminiscient volume stated that Cannon and Williams "kissed and made up, and at the close of that Congress Williams offered the usual vote of thanks" to the Speaker.¹¹⁰

The minority members were loyal to their program, which had been adopted in caucus, and followed the leadership of Williams until the end of the session that closed on May 30, 1908. Often the House sat late in the evening. To be present at every session meant doing much of the routine work at night or early in the morning, which entailed a sacrifice of social pleasures and rest. The majority were not so inconvenienced as the opposition because, after the adoption of the various resolutions submitted by the Rules Committee, every measure could be made a special order and passed by a bare majority. Majority members as individuals had no freedom of opinion or action.

The accomplishments of the minority's aggressive policy were varied. Williams forced the House to take a large

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 4946.

¹⁰⁹ *Jackson Daily News*, April 19, 1908.

¹¹⁰ Clark, *My Quarter Century of American Politics*, II, 345.

number of roll calls which would not have been taken under ordinary circumstances.¹¹¹ Each roll call required about forty minutes, and the average legislative day was about five hours.¹¹² Apparently, this was a great waste of time and money to the House and taxpayers respectively. "Indeed, instead of delaying business Williams practically expedited it,"¹¹³ for the many special order resolutions, brought about by the systems of both Cannon and Williams, gave speed to the machinery of the House. The *Review of Reviews* noted that "if Mr. Williams' purpose was to call the attention of the country to the cynical mood of the majority, his methods were successful."¹¹⁴ From the point of view of securing the enactment of bills, the minority saw only one law for which it was contending placed on the statute books. This law, an employers' liability bill, was made possible by accepting on May 30, without division, a group of Senate amendments.¹¹⁵

Williams made mistakes as minority leader, but "gracefully" admitted them and appealed "sometimes to his colleagues for information."¹¹⁶ He doubtless erred in some of the minority committee assignments; but whether he erred or not, he at least gained a few personal enemies from the exercise of this power. He expressed his feelings about this problem in characteristic fashion in 1904 when he said: "If there has been any mistake, it is not a mistake of the Democracy in any way. I am willing to be counted as nothing if only the Democracy may be glorified."¹¹⁷

One committee assignment at the beginning of the Sixtieth Congress provoked a fight. In fact, the assignment was

¹¹¹ Jackson *Daily News*, May 26, 1908, claimed that the number was close to two hundred. An examination of the *Cong. Record* indicates that this claim was no exaggeration.

¹¹² Jackson *Daily News*, May 26, 1908.

¹¹³ Alexander, *History and Procedure of the House of Representatives*, 210.

¹¹⁴ *Review of Reviews*, XXXVII (1908), 519-20.

¹¹⁵ *Cong. Record*, 60 Cong., 1 Sess., 7308-7309.

¹¹⁶ Kingsbury, "John Sharp Williams, Leader," in *loc. cit.*, 171.

¹¹⁷ *Cong. Record*, 58 Cong., 2 Sess., 2039.

only an excuse; keen rivalry over a period of years formed the background and perhaps the real reason. Congressman Charles F. Booher of Missouri, in whom De Armond was interested, was placed on the Coinage, Weights and Measures Committee when he had wanted a place on the Census Committee. Williams and De Armond were noticed sitting together near the rear of the chamber. Williams had told James T. Lloyd of Missouri that he had made the recommendation at the instance of De Armond. That gentleman insisted that he had said nothing which warranted the statement. A New York *Times* reporter gathered the conversation:

“ ‘You said that Booher wanted Coinage, Weights, and Measures,’ said Williams.

“ ‘I did not,’ replied De Armond.

“ ‘Well, it is simply a difference of recollection,’ replied Williams.

“ ‘But it cannot be a difference of recollection, for I never said it,’ said De Armond.

“ ‘Then,’ said Williams, ‘let it go at that.’

“ ‘But no,’ insisted De Armond. ‘It seems very strange that you should have such an idea, unless you got me confused with some other member.’

“ ‘That is possible,’ replied Williams, ‘so we had better let the matter drop. As I remember it, you did say it.’ ”

Still the Missourian was not satisfied, and he proceeded to give at length his idea on what a gentleman should do when another gentleman declared that on a former occasion he did not say a thing. At this turn of the conversation the Mississippian showed impatience, and De Armond accused Williams of misrepresenting him deliberately:

“ ‘Any one who says that I told you that is a liar,’ De Armond declared.

“ ‘Do not say that, De Armond,’ replied Williams quietly, but looking fiercely at his antagonist. ‘It would not do to create a scene here in this House.’

“ ‘But my belief is,’ said De Armond, as they arose and faced each other, ‘that you are a damned liar.’ ”

Williams then punched him in the nose and De Armond struck back. A House clerk grabbed Williams, pinning both his arms. Before anyone could hold De Armond he succeeded in pounding Williams several times in the face. A scratch under the latter's eye brought blood. A few moments later Williams took a cab to his home and De Armond remained on the floor to give the throng of reporters his version of the fight.¹¹⁸

Williams was elected by the Mississippi legislature to the United States Senate in 1908. He refused the importunities of his friends who wished him to serve another term in the House, although, since his senatorial term did not begin until March 4, 1911, he could have done so. Williams not only refused to serve another term in the House, but decided to resign his position as minority leader at the beginning of the second session of the Sixtieth Congress in order that he might use his influence in choosing a successor, and lend his assistance in maintaining unity for one session under the new leader.

Either of two men could logically have succeeded the Representative from Mississippi. David De Armond and Champ Clark had been in the House a number of years, had served efficiently on some of the most important committees, had gained recognition as able leaders, and oddly enough were both Missourians. Clark had befriended and co-operated with Williams, whereas De Armond had protested vigorously some of the committee assignments.

For some time Williams had favored Clark as his successor. In December, 1905, when he was called home because of the serious illness of his daughter, he left Clark in temporary leadership. After his nomination to the Senate he relinquished his place on the Ways and Means Commit-

¹¹⁸ *New York Times*, December 20, 1907.

tee to Clark. In the summer of 1908 Williams wrote to Clark that he was going to send his resignation as minority leader to Henry D. Clayton, chairman of the Democratic House Caucus, on a specified date. Clark took the hint and wrote letters to all the Democratic members of the House except two. By the time Williams' resignation was publicly known, Clark had been pledged the support of a majority of the minority members. Williams entered the caucus a few minutes late, just after his resignation had been accepted and resolutions expressing appreciation of his leadership had been adopted. He remained on his feet, expressed his thanks for the co-operation and honor he had enjoyed, and placed Clark's name before the group as his successor.¹¹⁹ Clark was elected unanimously to fill the position during the short session of 1908-1909, and thus began a career of thirteen years' duration as leader of the House Democrats. The resigning leader had made the election of his successor "certain and easy."¹²⁰

Although the Reed-Cannon system was not overthrown until after Williams left the House, there was a noticeable change in the attitude of some few of the majority before he made his exit at the close of the Sixtieth Congress. Under the Reed Rules the Speaker appointed the Rules Committee, of which he was chairman. Through this committee he could exercise almost autocratic power over legislation in the House. Williams, during his term as minority leader, did not fail to point out the undemocratic features of these rules. Henry A. Cooper of Wisconsin was the first Republican to join him in expressing open opposition on the floor of the House. On December 2, 1907, at the opening of the Sixtieth Congress, Cooper stated that, although agreeing with the Democrats in their opposition, he could not consistently vote against the adoption of the rules.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Natchez *Daily Democrat*, December 6, 1908.

¹²⁰ Clark, *My Quarter Century of American Politics*, II, 28.

¹²¹ *Cong. Record*, 60 Cong., 1 Sess., 6. Cooper answered "present" on the roll call for the adoption of the Cannon Rules, which were adopted by a 198-160 vote.

During the closing days of the Sixtieth Congress, in the short session of 1908-1909, the Republicans passed another special order resolution which provided for the suspension of the rules by a bare majority vote instead of the usual two-thirds vote.¹²² It originated from the three majority members of the Rules Committee without the knowledge of the minority members.¹²³ The real significance in the adoption of the new special order resolution was not in its passage, but in the opposition. Six Republicans defied their party caucus and voted "nay" with the Democrats.¹²⁴ Five of the western insurgents formed a nucleus around which others were gathered until in March, 1910, with the aid of a solid Democratic vote, the Reed-Cannon Rules were overthrown.¹²⁵

Williams held a firm belief in the common people such as few men in public life possess. He maintained that the chosen instrument in any state of civilization for reaching a higher stage was "the rough common sense and common conscience of the common people."¹²⁶ Class distinction was an anathema to him. Although he himself was a man of "fair education,"¹²⁷ of moderate wealth, of books, of travel—in short the "embodiment of the old cultural traditions of the aristocracy of the South"¹²⁸—he wore no frills but was "one of the plainest men of the House" and "as easy as an old shoe."

Besides having the welfare of the masses at heart, Wil-

¹²² *Ibid.*, 60 Cong., 2 Sess., 3310-11.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 3313. The resolution was introduced and passed by a vote of 103 to 98 on February 26.

¹²⁴ These insurgents were Augustus P. Gardener of Massachusetts, George W. Price of Illinois, William P. Hepburn and Elbert H. Hubbard of Iowa, Victor Murdock of Kansas, and George W. Norris of Nebraska. See *ibid.*, 3312.

¹²⁵ George W. Norris, "The Secret of His Power—A History of the Insurgent Movement in the House of Representatives," in *La Follette's Weekly Magazine* (Madison, Wis.), II (1910), 7-9, is a good account of this "revolution" by one of the insurgent leaders.

¹²⁶ *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 1 Sess., 22.

¹²⁷ *Official Cong. Directory*, Fifty-third—Sixtieth Congresses.

¹²⁸ Denis T. Lynch, *Grover Cleveland, A Man Four-Square* (New York, 1932), 523.

liams had "the consciousness of an abiding conviction in the truth of the things" in which he believed and in the "absolute fallacy of the things" which he politically opposed.¹²⁹ Theodore E. Burton, an Ohio Republican member, was of the opinion that Williams "sometimes carried his partisanship to extreme length."¹³⁰ On occasions men believed him to be wrong, but they admired "the honesty of his conviction, the purity of his purpose and his sincerity in any position he took."¹³¹ This "absolute confidence in the eternal righteousness of Democratic policies, purposes, and principles" caused Williams at times to place too much confidence in his own ability and in that of his Democratic colleagues. As he once said in apologizing to the House for answering impromptu a prepared speech, he would "always wade in . . . trusting to God and the truth for the result,"¹³² when sometimes the truth could have been clothed in more logic and force if the speaker had taken time to become more familiar with the question under discussion.

Although an orator of no mean ability, Williams won his laurels in the House as a debater. It has been said of him that he "met the best debaters of the majority and came out second best in no encounter."¹³³ A colleague placed him among the foremost debaters the country ever produced.¹³⁴ Williams was one of the best debaters in the House from 1893 to 1909, wrote George E. Foss, a Republican member, and "in a catch-as-catch-can struggle he was alert, quick to seize an opportunity and invariably came off with

¹²⁹ *Cong. Record*, 59 Cong., 1 Sess., 7314.

¹³⁰ Theodore E. Burton to author, December 6, 1928, in possession of author. Burton served with Williams in the House, 1895-1909.

¹³¹ James T. Lloyd to author, December 3, 1928, in possession of author. Lloyd was a Missouri Democrat who served in the house with Williams from 1897 to 1909.

¹³² *Cong. Record*, 58 Cong., 2 Sess., 1228.

¹³³ Watkins, "John Sharp Williams," in *loc. cit.*, 970.

¹³⁴ Clark, *My Quarter Century of American Politics*, II, 348; Fuller, *Speakers of the House*, 307.

flying colors.”¹³⁵ A cardinal point in the debating of the Representative from Mississippi was to answer an argument or debate as soon as it was made on the floor in order that both sides of any public question would appear together in the *Congressional Record*. Obviously, in answering extemporaneously speeches of his political opponents, many of which had been carefully prepared, Williams was at a decided disadvantage. Voluminous reading and study combined with a superb memory enabled him to offset this disadvantage to an appreciable degree. According to a colleague Williams did, however, at times take the floor to debate on a subject “without sufficient knowledge of its merits.”¹³⁶

Williams was one of the most scholarly men in the House. His superior ability and learning seem to have been demonstrated with the greatest simplicity.¹³⁷ He possessed the knack of using in debates the simplest illustrations to substantiate his arguments. A Republican member observed that Williams was very instrumental in “raising to a more scholarly level the humdrum debates of the House.”¹³⁸

The English used by Williams was “plain, simple, excellent, without ornament, [and] apparently instinctive.” His sentences were “complete and symmetrical.”¹³⁹ He seemed never to want “for a word or sentence to express in choicest English his opinion of men and measures.”¹⁴⁰ That “he had a fluency of expression truly remarkable” was the verdict

¹³⁵ George E. Foss to author, December 5, 1928, in possession of author. This member was a Republican from Chicago. He served with Williams fourteen years, 1895-1909, and though a political enemy of Williams', he had great admiration for the member from Mississippi.

¹³⁶ James T. Lloyd to author, December 3, 1928, in possession of author.

¹³⁷ Kingsbury, “John Sharp Williams, Leader,” in *loc. cit.*, 170, says that Williams took his job as minority leader “almost as easily as if he were sitting on his Yazoo piazza.”

¹³⁸ Victor Murdock to author, December 4, 1928, in possession of author. Murdock was a member of the House from Kansas the last six years of Williams' term, 1903-1909.

¹³⁹ Kingsbury, “John Sharp Williams, Leader,” in *loc. cit.*, 170.

¹⁴⁰ Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, November 10, 1903.

of another.¹⁴¹ In speaking of the eulogy delivered in the House on February 25, 1899, soon after the death of his friend, comrade, and fellow Mississippian, Edward C. Walthall, Senator Hoar wrote that Williams "described the Southern gentleman of our time in a sentence which deserves to stand by the side of Chaucer's: 'The ideal gentleman was always honest; spoke the truth; faced his enemy; fought him, if necessary; never quarrelled with him nor talked about him; rode well; shot well; used chaste and correct English; insulted no man—bore no insult from any; was studiously kind to his inferiors, especially his slaves; cordially hospitable to his equals; courteous to his superiors, if he acknowledged any; he scorned a demagogue,' but loved his people, and held it mean to prefer any class or individual interest most of all his own, to that of the masses of his countrymen."¹⁴²

Williams did not have the opportunity of proving himself a constructive statesman during his career in the House as he was, with the exception of his first Congress, a member of the minority. His constructive influence is shown in amendments to Republican measures, in the change in policy of the Democrats of the House, and in his definite influence on the Democratic party. "A true Democrat is neither a conservative nor a radical," wrote Williams in 1905. Common sense would at times suggest "that a cause can best be carried to success by going slow," and at others "that a battle can best be won by an impetuous charge."¹⁴³ Although he thrice espoused the candidacy of William Jennings Bryan, he sought more than once to restrain the Commoner in some of his liberal tendencies.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ William C. Brantley to author, December 18, 1928, in possession of author.

¹⁴² George F. Hoar, *Autobiography of Seventy Years* (New York, 1903), II, 192; *Cong. Record*, 55 Cong., 3 Sess., 2412.

¹⁴³ Williams to William B. Lamar, October 12, 1905, in *Cong. Record*, 59 Cong., 1 Sess., 355.

¹⁴⁴ The government ownership of railroads and the subtreasury plan are probably the two best examples.

On the other hand, Williams certainly believed in legislative progress. The following are a few of the progressive and constructive measures that he advocated while a member of the House: the adoption of a national budget, the popular election of United States Senators, the income tax, the elimination of the Lame Duck Session of Congress, the publicity of campaign contributions, the granting of Federal aid for highway construction, the free rural mail delivery, the granting of more power to the Interstate Commerce Commission, the reformation of the national banking system, and pure food legislation. In at least two progressive movements which gained much momentum during his stay in the House, Williams took no part. He was not a prohibitionist in theory or in practice, and he opposed the woman suffrage movement.¹⁴⁵

Although Williams accorded to the Federal government the full powers delegated to it, he jealously guarded the states in all the powers reserved to them. He did not believe in the general tendency toward concentration of power in the central authority. One of the very few prepared speeches delivered by the Mississippian during his career in the House was on the subject of "Federal Usurpation of Powers."¹⁴⁶

If some of the exponents of Federal usurpation of powers argued that the central government must increase its jurisdiction in various fields because the states would not properly function in them, Williams maintained that the powers of the Federal government were based on the Constitution and not upon what the states did or did not do.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Kingsbury, "John Sharp Williams, Leader," in *loc. cit.*, 170, cleverly stated that "the whiskey has no effect upon . . . [Williams], whereas he improves the whiskey." Williams' part in the enactment of these Constitutional amendments will be taken up in Chapter XIV.

¹⁴⁶ *Cong. Record*, 60 Cong., 1 Sess., Appendix, 227-34. See also John Sharp Williams, "Federal Usurpations," in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Philadelphia), XXXII (1908), 185-211.

¹⁴⁷ Williams' speech of acceptance of his election to the United States Senate before the Mississippi legislature. Quoted in *Jackson Daily News*, January 22, 1908.

While admitting that government was necessary and "ought to be made good," he maintained that it was a "necessary evil growing out of the vices of human nature"¹⁴⁸ and "that most bad government has grown out of too much government."¹⁴⁹ As a profound student of government Williams constantly "harked back to the Fathers of the Republic," especially to Thomas Jefferson.

¹⁴⁸ Williams, "Federal Usurpations," in *loc. cit.*, 185-211.

¹⁴⁹ *Id.*, *Thomas Jefferson*, 49.

Chapter VIII

THE RACE FOR THE SENATE

AFTER much hesitation Williams announced himself as a candidate for a United States senatorship in the summer of 1899. At a meeting in Winona on March 16 Senator William V. Sullivan, Governor Anse McLaurin, Representative John Allen, and John Sharp Williams were present. "They're off!" exclaimed Editor James W. Lambert of the *Natchez Daily Democrat*. "The flag went down on a good start . . . [but] 'John Sharp' was . . . left at the post. It may have been that he did not like the condition of the track" as he was not a good "mud horse."¹ That McLaurin and Allen would "have an open field to the end of the race" was a hastily drawn conclusion.² Within a short while Williams developed a case of malarial fever. As he lay abed, convalescing from this illness, he conveyed the impression to some friends of having no enthusiasm whatsoever.³ However, he was only waiting for public pressure to come his way.

The Carthage, Mississippi, *Carthaginian* declared in no uncertain words for Representative Williams. "We have never made any secret of our preference for Mr. Williams for the Senate over all others named for that position," it was quoted as having said.⁴ The Democratic Executive Committee of Holmes County met at Lexington a week later and adopted resolutions endorsing Williams' public record. A committee was named to visit Cedar Grove and urge its owner to offer himself for the Senate. The commit-

¹ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, March 17, 1899.

² *Jackson Daily Clarion-Ledger*, March 18, 1899.

³ *Ibid.*, May 23, 1899.

⁴ *Ibid.*, May 30, 1899.

tee was instructed to pledge him the vote of Holmes County.⁵ The Yazoo City *Sentinel* commented that "so general has been pressure for him to enter the race that we do not see how he can longer resist it."⁶ Within a day or so a mass convention was held in Yazoo City. In response to resolutions adopted at this convention, Williams formally announced his candidacy for the United States Senate.⁷

His position on leading questions was outlined in a finished speech. In this attempt for the Senate, as in his first effort to win a place in the House, Williams did not "get to first base." Despite the fact, a concise review of his platform seems worth-while. It was not made up of political planks of a local nature, but was constructed entirely of national timber. He endeavored to educate his constituents in the field of national and international questions, not to encourage factional issues within the Democratic party in state areas.

He favored free and unlimited bimetallic coinage at the ratio of 16 to 1. Problems of taxation, economy, and the tariff he summed up in a paragraph which opposed the protection of any special interest, and favored only enough taxation to secure "the revenue needful to carry on the government economically administered." He continued to advocate an income tax because "it takes from those who have much, much, and from those who have little, little." Appropriations for rivers and harbors were deemed among "the best investments a people could make." Rural free delivery was desired "as a permanent, universal and undisturbed part of our postal work." Postal savings banks had three characteristics that appealed to Williams. He believed that such banks would encourage thrift and industry among the people, would enable the government to reduce the rate of interest on part of the public debt to 2

⁵ *Ibid.*, June 8, 1899.

⁶ Yazoo City (Miss.) *Sentinel*, quoted in *ibid.*

⁷ Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, June 13, 1899.

per cent, and would expose "some of the deficiencies of our present banking system."

A strong plank was his advocacy of dissolution of all trusts. "I will do everything I can," so read a part of this announcement speech, "to hasten the inauguration and completion of the Nicaraguan Canal." He opposed the policy of "William the Drifter, surnamed McKinley" in which the President had discarded that distinctively American policy of "friendship for all nations and entangling alliances with none." In abandoning this policy, McKinley had acquired the title "President of the United States, and Military Emperor of the Thousand Islands."⁸ It cannot be denied that this was a true Jeffersonian platform. Such a platform, even though the candidate did not wage a successful battle, was sure to attract favorable attention. It also impressed upon the voters of Mississippi Williams' great desire to be sent to the United States Senate.

Almost a month later, after several county primaries had instructed their delegates to the state legislature to vote for Governor McLaurin, Williams effected his withdrawal: "I am convinced that the lines are drawn everywhere outside the fifth district upon issues of State politics, personal issues and questions of veracity between man and man . . . issues which cannot be logically justified."⁹ He thanked all his friends and released those legislators who had been instructed for him, as well as uninstructed members who had merely promised to vote for him. Williams was "literally exhausted" physically. None of the counties of the Fifth District had acted to instruct their delegates. He saw no chance of winning and preferred to wait a second opportunity rather than to suffer defeat. By withdrawing at this time he would injure neither of his competitors to any appreciable degree. "Private John" and "Uncle Anse" were to fight it out between themselves.

Eight years elapsed before another chance presented

⁸ *Ibid.*, June 14, 1899.

⁹ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, July 9, 1899.

itself. Late in 1906 Representative Williams and Governor James K. Vardaman announced as senatorial candidates, although, in reality, the campaign did not officially open until the spring of 1907. As it turned out, these were the only candidates.

Mississippi has had the equivalent of popular election of Senators since the adoption of the constitution of 1890. Although it provided for election by the legislature, the legislators were merely to record the opinions of a majority of their constituents, determined by instructions enacted in county conventions and, later, by a majority of the votes cast in a direct primary. Because of an educational prerequisite to suffrage the primary was practically confined to white men. Although it was known to be a Democratic primary, no successful method of preventing participation by members of other parties had evolved; in fact, a person's loyalty to the Democratic party was rarely questioned if he presented himself at the polls. In 1907 the only requirements were that the voter be a man of legal age, residence, registration, and education. As a result of such a policy thousands of Republicans voted in the Democratic primary.

Williams and Vardaman presented contrasting figures and qualifications. Williams was a rather small man physically, a scholar who was educated in American and foreign universities, a lawyer with fifteen years of practice, and a Congressman with fourteen years of experience. During five of the fourteen years that Williams had served in the House, he was minority leader; at this time he possessed a national outlook upon the problems of the day.

Vardaman, a somewhat larger man than Williams, had a heavy crop of coal-black hair which hung several inches lower than his coat collar. Although not born of wealth and possessing no higher education, Governor Vardaman had climbed to the top in Mississippi politics. Admitted to the bar in 1888, he had begun to practice law in Winona, Mississippi. Besides his law practice, he manifested an in-

terest in newspaper work by becoming editor of the *Winona Advance*. From Greenwood, where he had moved a short while before, Vardaman was elected in 1889 to the state legislature; thus he began a career in politics which lasted until 1919. The speakership of the House of Representatives failed to prove a stepping stone to the Governor's office when the lawyer-editor was defeated in 1895. Defeated again in 1899, he was successful in 1903, and in January of the following year began his single term as governor. During the Spanish-American War Vardaman served as captain and then major in the Fifth United States Volunteer Infantry.¹⁰ It was said by an intimate friend of Williams that he actually helped Vardaman to become governor of Mississippi. In the campaign Vardaman's platform was the race problem. Williams aided him in order to show Roosevelt what would occur in the southern states if the President continued his policy of appointing Negro Republicans to Federal positions in the South.¹¹

Beginning in January, 1907, both senatorial aspirants began to give out interviews to the press. Charges flew thick and fast. Vardaman was supported by William Randolph Hearst, a bitter personal enemy of Williams. An article published in one of the Hearst's New York papers asserted that Williams had organized a part of the prominent Democrats throughout the country into an anti-Bryan movement. Upon seeing the article, Williams wrote the editor a characteristic letter in which he said: "There is not one word of accuracy or justice in connecting me with any factional movement of any description in the Democratic party. . . . I shall make it my work now, as I have made it my work hitherto, to harmonize discordant elements within the party where they are found to exist, and try to bring the party into line united and strong. . . . I wish to God, Democrats would quit fighting one another and unite in

¹⁰ *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1927*, p. 1647.

¹¹ *Dickson, Old-Fashioned Senator*, 127-28.

fighting bad politics and bad tendencies and for fundamental Democratic ideals.”¹²

It was true that Williams opposed Bryan on a great matter of public policy: he had journeyed to London in 1906 to persuade Bryan to declare against the nationalization of railroads. Williams had published an interview sometime earlier in which he stated that a “Democratic convention ought to vote down the idea of Government ownership of railroads.” He added in the same interview that once that idea had been thrown aside and out of the way, “Mr. Bryan would be the strongest candidate for the Presidency.”¹³ The Governor’s faction in the state gave wide publicity to the charges of the Hearst agency. Vardaman came out solidly for government ownership of railroads.

Interviewed on January 14 by the New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, Williams answered two questions, both of which played a part in the campaign. In answering “what the South should do in regard to the race problem” Williams stated that his section should work out the solution of the problem alone. “I want to hold our destinies in the hollow of our own hands and not permit them to be molded by outsiders.” If the South did not take steps to ameliorate the strained racial relations, the North might seek a settlement of the problem, a settlement which in all probability would not be applicable. He was asked in the second place if he thought that the Democratic party at its national convention in 1908 should adopt a resolution declaring itself a white man’s party. Williams replied that he thought everybody already knew that the Democratic party belonged to the white man. Was that not the reason why the South had become solidly Democratic? The party would perhaps lose a few votes from some of its local candidates in the urban districts of the North if such a resolution were passed, but it would not prove beneficial to any Democrat who was a

¹² Published in *Natchez Daily Democrat*, January 15, 1907.

¹³ *Ibid.*

candidate for a national office.¹⁴ Vardaman favored the adoption of such a resolution.

Desiring to go before the people with the problems on which he and his opponent differed, Williams favored a series of joint debates, and said so in a public statement. He was "willing and anxious to meet the Governor on the stump, and discuss the government ownership proposition with him." The challenge was "sufficiently clear for any man, whether or not endowed with logical faculty." It was so direct and so widespread that it could not well be ignored.¹⁵ But ignored it was until within a few weeks of the close of the campaign! The Governor based his rejection upon the grounds that, first, he had made no extended list of speaking engagements; second, official duties kept him busily engaged; and third, he would be busy with the state's business until midsummer.¹⁶

Despite the fact that Williams was busy with his duties as minority leader and with a senatorial campaign, he found time to write many letters to his friends in Mississippi asking for support in the coming campaign. The senatorial contest, he wrote, was simply a business proposition: "Mississippi wants in Washington somebody to do her work there, not only her work but the work of the Democratic party, and to a large extent of the South."¹⁷ Which of the candidates could better meet these requirements? Williams stated that he was "seeking promotion from the House of Representatives to the Senate—where I will do the same sort of work that I have been trained to do by some thirteen years of service in the lower house."¹⁸ He urged the people to use the Jeffersonian criteria of competency, faithfulness, and honesty in making their selection of public officials. He knew that he had been "honest and faithful, industrious,

¹⁴ This interview was quoted in *ibid.*, January 17, 1907.

¹⁵ Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, January 20, 1907.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, February 27, 1907.

¹⁷ Williams to J. E. Warnock, February 9, 1907, in Williams Papers.

¹⁸ *Id.* to W. J. Fortinberry, January 11, 1907, *ibid.*

studious, constant,"¹⁹ and he was perfectly willing to be judged by the standards laid down by Thomas Jefferson. He had stood for those things which he thought were for the welfare of the masses and had opposed special privilege and class legislation. "I am seeking a higher arena of service in the Senate. . . . I would be glad indeed to have your support."²⁰

In one of these personal messages, the political philosophy of a public servant was revealed. It was an extended statement of Cleveland's short announcement that a public office was a public trust: "A man in public life . . . ought to try to be studious in the investigation of public questions, strong as such intellect as God has given him may enable him in the advocacy of right, after, by investigation, he thinks he has discovered it, faithful to the interest of the people, . . . constant in his attendance at the post of duty, never asleep while at his post, but watchful and vigilant, practical and not visionary in what he attempts to do, responsive to the wishes of his constituents, faithful to the fundamental principles."²¹ All this Williams had tried to do during his Congressional career. He was willing to stand on his record as a national legislator and as a Representative from two Congressional constituencies. If he could not "point with pride to it," he was ready to defend it because he had made a "business of the study of public questions with the view to their solution along sensible lines."²² He was sure it was not discreditable either to him or to the state. He promised that he would not destroy what influence he might exert on an all-important issue by choosing a hobby and by "baying at the moon."²³

The majority of the newspapers of the state supported Williams in this campaign. Vardaman's statements and in-

¹⁹ *Id.* to S. J. Creekmore, February 12, 1907, *ibid.*

²⁰ *Id.* to John B. Taylor, February 14, 1907, *ibid.*

²¹ *Id.* to Norvel Fortinberry, January 11, 1907, *ibid.*

²² *Id.* to J. F. Ray, January 10, 1907, *ibid.*

²³ *Id.* to W. N. East, January 11, 1907, *ibid.*

terviews were given out to the press of his faction and were rarely quoted by the opposing papers, except for some adverse criticism. The same was true in regard to the policy of Williams and his supporting papers. Of the daily papers of the state, Williams could depend on more than 75 per cent for favorable comment. Of the weekly papers, most of which were never circulated outside the counties in which they were published, Vardaman could claim a larger portion. Some of the foremost dailies complained because they did not receive copies of the Governor's interviews. In fact, a paper published in the state capital explained that it would have cheerfully printed a copy of the Governor's interviews if it had received them. It did not, however, feel called upon to print them from New Orleans and Memphis newspapers, after they were twenty-four hours old.²⁴

On February 12 the Jackson *Evening News*, under the caption, "JIMMIE K. GETS A GENTEEL SKINNING," published a nine-column interview with John Sharp Williams given that day in Washington.²⁵ In this interview Williams gave an indication of the type of campaign that he was going to conduct. At the beginning of the lengthy discussion he said that he had hesitated about answering an earlier statement of the Governor, "owing to the rather personal nature of Governor Vardaman's interview and my lack of desire to be engaged in an unseemly newspaper controversy." The remarks to which Williams alluded indicated that he had the "big head." The Governor based his opinion upon Williams' statement that he "would certainly have a great deal more influence in Washington" than any new man. Williams' speeches in Congress were said to be full of "erudite irrelevancies and learned non-essentials, water-soaked with words and ornamented by self-adulation." Williams was pleased that the Governor had not criticized his record of fourteen years as a national

²⁴ Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, January 21, 1907.

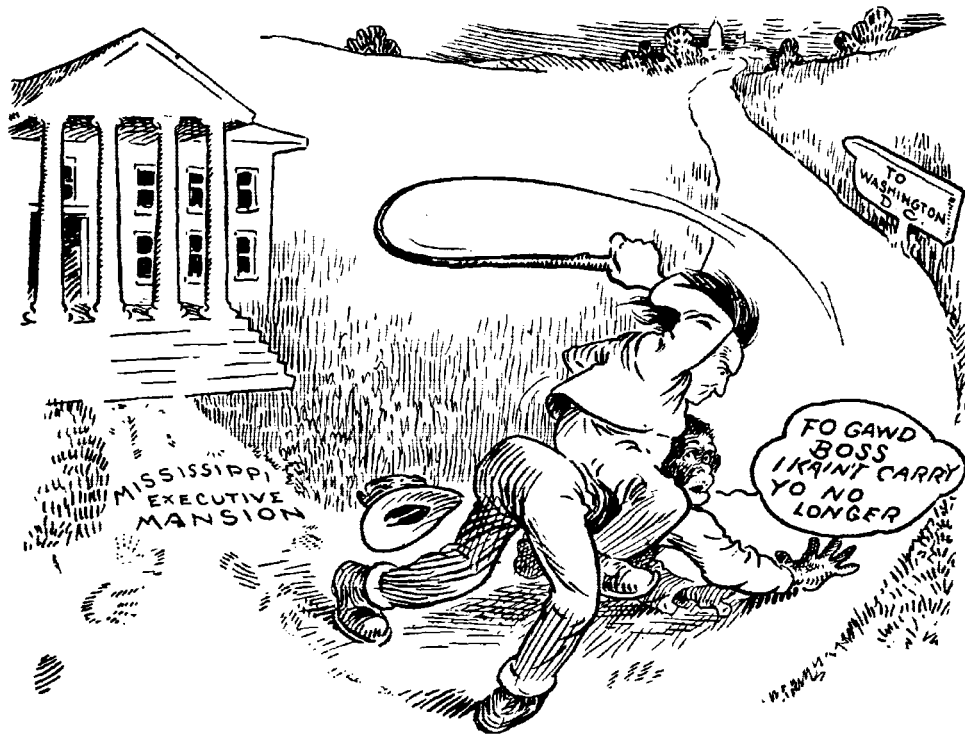
²⁵ Jackson *Evening News*, February 12, 1907.

legislator. Privately he had already indicated his desire to stand upon his record; now he publicly proclaimed it as his campaign platform. "I am more than willing," he said, "to make it the issue." If the Governor chose to ignore this issue, Williams demanded that he give his opinion on the great national questions of the day.

The race question found its usual conspicuous place. In 1903 Vardaman had stated that the solution of this menacing problem was to stop the education of the Negro at the white man's expense. Williams interrogated the Governor as to why at this time, four years later, the only solution for the Negro problem was the repeal of the Fifteenth Amendment. "No change has come except the Governor is running for a different office." Williams knew that the Fifteenth Amendment could not be repealed, nor could it be changed. To substantiate his view he quoted the opinions of Senator James Z. George of Mississippi and Senator Benjamin R. Tillman of South Carolina. The latter asserted on the floor of the Senate on January 21, 1907: "I do not expect to live to see any change in the constitution of the United States one way or the other." Williams knew nothing more perilous to the white man's civilization of the South than to make this delicate race question "a football to be played with by politicians in the Senate and in the House." The Governor, according to Williams, had accused him of demagoguery because he had stated that if the Federal government owned the railroads, Negroes would be placed in important positions in the transportation system. Williams replied that the Governor had feasted for four years upon the Negro as a political asset, but that when anyone else attempted to make political hay of this issue Vardaman apparently resented it "as a species of trespassing on his game preserve."²⁶

Already the press outside the state was taking note of the

²⁶ *Ibid.*; Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, February 12, 1907.



The End of a Political Journey.

FROM THE JACKSON *Daily News*, JULY 15, 1907.

Permission of Fred Sullens, editor, Jackson Daily News

early manifestation of enthusiasm in the senatorial campaign. The *Washington Star*, for example, devoted half a column of its editorial page to boosting the leadership of Representative Williams. This editorial was quoted in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*. Excerpts from it finally found their way into the Natchez *Daily Democrat*. "He is," to quote from the editorial, "the best leader his party has known in the House in twenty years."²⁷ Oddly enough, the gubernatorial faction later gave added publicity to this editorial.

After the close of the session Williams returned to his home in Mississippi to begin an active campaign. He lacked publicity personnel and a political machine. However, his brother, Christopher Harris, had been making appearances for him. Williams' secretary returned from Washington with him, opened an office in Yazoo City, and endeavored to take care of the correspondence. It was not long before Williams noted the power of a machine and observed that Vardaman had "a self-constituted organization, composed of recipients of appointments to judgeships, trustees, and militia 'gewgaws.'"²⁸

After spending some time studying the best approach to the problems of campaigning, Williams decided to make one speech a day for six days each week. He mapped out a program that would enable him to reach all parts of the state before the campaign closed.

The first notable campaign pamphlet came from the pen of Dr. Benjamin F. Ward of Winona. It was entitled "The Man, the Hour, and the Opportunity."²⁹ Dr. Ward, an intimate friend and political advisor of the Governor, held the position of president of the State Board of Health. This pamphlet attempted to present its threefold subject as a

²⁷ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, February 22, 1907. James W. Lambert was editor of the *Daily Democrat*.

²⁸ Williams to Dr. John Y. Murry, May 3, 1907, in Williams Papers.

²⁹ *Jackson Evening News*, March 18, 1907.

mantle which only the Governor could wear. "The Man" was Vardaman; "The Hour" was now; "The Opportunity" was the repeal of the Fifteenth Amendment.

In answer to Dr. Ward's pamphlet Williams appropriately asked if anyone believed that the Governor could have the Fifteenth Amendment repealed. According to the *Jackson Evening News*, he was successful in finding only two men who would assert their belief that the Governor had the ability to accomplish what he advocated.³⁰ The House minority leader was certainly plain-spoken on this occasion. If the people of Mississippi wanted a man in the Senate whose sole and self-appointed mission was merely to advocate the repeal of the Fifteenth Amendment, a mission so impracticable that no one could accuse him of expecting to accomplish it, then that was their affair.³¹

The Governor must have been much embarrassed, if he really did not relish a joint debate, by an invitation extended to both candidates on April 28 by the president of the Greenville Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, in Washington County.³² Williams offered to take a week off from his speaking engagements so that Vardaman would not be "prevented from accepting by pressure of official business." Could the Governor name a convenient date between May 25 and June 1? ³³ It was stated later that the Governor had accepted this invitation and that Williams had wired his acceptance. The only condition that Williams stated in his acceptance was that it really be a joint debate with speeches and rejoinders by both men.³⁴

³⁰ *Ibid.*, April 11, 1907. This paper termed this public question of Williams "a notable contribution to the state campaign."

³¹ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, April 13, 1907.

³² *Jackson Sunday News*, April 28, 1907.

³³ *Jackson Evening News*, April 29, 1907.

³⁴ *Jackson Daily News*, June 13, 1907. The *Evening News* beginning May 16, 1907, was called the *Daily News*. Before May 16, a morning edition of this paper had been called the *Daily News* and an afternoon edition the *Evening News*. A Sunday edition bore the name of *Sunday News*.

The Williams' papers had apparently misstated Vardaman, as the debate did not materialize.

The campaign was enlivened by an article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, "The Vardaman Idea," by Judge Harris Dickson of the municipal court of Vicksburg.³⁵ Vardaman is said to have stated to a friend, after reading it, that he would order a thousand copies for distribution as campaign literature. "The Vardaman Idea," as explained by the Judge, was the proper solution of the race problem. It was nothing more nor less than the Abraham Lincoln idea. The Negro, though free, was not to be enfranchised. He quoted the Emancipator to prove his point: "There must be a position of superior and inferior. . . . I, as much as any other man, am in favor of having the superior assigned to the white man." The Negro, concluded Dickson, was incapable of governing, or of attaining the highest civilization. But what little progress he had made toward higher civilization had been made in the South at the feet of the white man.³⁶

Several tricks of the political game were tried by Williams' opponent. One was the English practice of kicking the enemy upstairs. Even before he left Washington, Williams had been interviewed in regard to his anticipated candidacy for the Democratic nomination for President the following year. He had answered in his usual sarcastic vein that he really would like to live in the White House, but that his wife, Betty, strenuously objected, because she was afraid that their two young children would catch their "death of cold" playing in the damp cellars.³⁷ Again Wil-

³⁵ Harris Dickson, "The Vardaman Idea," in *Saturday Evening Post* (Philadelphia), April 27, 1907. Dickson later wrote that he had supported Vardaman for the Senate because Williams "held a commanding position in the House of Representatives, which I then believed it would take you years to acquire in the Senate. I was mistaken." Dickson to Williams, October 16, 1913, in Williams Papers, Cedar Grove Plantation.

³⁶ Dickson, "The Vardaman Idea," in *loc. cit.*, April 27, 1907. Excerpts from this article were quoted in the *Natchez Daily Democrat*, May 12, 1907.

³⁷ *Jackson Evening News*, January 2, 1907.

liams' opponent contended that he should be retained as minority leader for two reasons: in the first place, he had been a success in that capacity; secondly, in the event that the Democrats should gain control of the House in 1908, Williams would become Speaker. When neither of these ideas was well taken, the Vardaman forces shifted the attack to the other wing of the Williams political array—his record—and the slogan became "Williams has done nothing." To meet such a charge the Williams forces adopted the interrogatory statement, "What has Williams done?"³⁸ With this challenge Ben H. Wells, as second in command, assembled a formidable army of facts from the *Congressional Record*, and used them on the political battlefield in squads of pamphlets.

The Governor should be elected, the people were told by Williams' opponents, to retain him in public office. Williams would remain in Congress if he were defeated in the race for the Senate. Political battles have been won on such psychology in Mississippi. Williams knew the power of such arguments. He decided to stake his entire public career on the declaration: "I would not wait for any second hint from Mississippi that she wanted me to quit her service, and the hint given by defeating me in behalf of the man who observed the propaganda that Vardaman is preaching would amply suffice."³⁹

The closing days of May brought forth more campaign propaganda from the Vardaman element. A report was circulated that, in Washington, Williams had made a white employee eat with a Negro servant. The truth of the situation was that Williams had discharged his white servant because she did eat with the Negro. Williams suspected that

³⁸ See Natchez *Daily Democrat*, April 30, 1907; Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, May 12, 1907; Jackson *Daily News*, May 16, 1907.

³⁹ Williams to Thomas Spight, May 27, 1907, in Williams Papers. The letter also stated that "a vote for Vardaman does not mean to continue Vardaman and me in the public service. It means to retire me and continue him."

this story was being told by someone who was "purposely propagating falsehoods." ⁴⁰

Dr. Ward's second pamphlet, "The Unjust Judge and the Government of One Blood," was disseminated from the Governor's office. Quoting from Dr. Ward that "every Negro in Mississippi today regards Mr. Williams as their [*sic*] champion in this contest," the editor of the *Jackson Evening News* replied: "The Negroes of Mississippi are paying no attention whatever to the senatorial campaign." ⁴¹ When a copy of this circular reached Williams he wrote to a friend: "Dr. Ward is a very worthy character, a relic of the old sort, which is much beloved and revered by me. He is evidently growing weak, for his last article is so absolutely illogical that it needs no reply. . . . I want to keep the campaign between Governor Vardaman and me." ⁴²

In a letter of May 4 to Congressman Wilson S. Hill of the Fourth District, Williams said that he was afraid a good many of his friends were "living in a sort of fool's paradise. . . . There seems to be no sort of organization and no sort of serious work going on. . . . My friends are over confident and are taking a good deal of it out in boasting." ⁴³

Early in June Williams sent out letters asking his friends to organize Williams clubs throughout the state. He felt that it would be best in all of the clubs to elect farmers for both presidents and vice-presidents and men from the towns for secretaries.⁴⁴ The reasons for this arrangement were two-fold: first, the farmers as a group were being claimed by the opposing candidate; second, secretaries living in urban districts would have better mail facilities.

Williams was accused of trying to secure the registration of Negroes in the state in order that they might vote for him

⁴⁰ Williams to R. A. Barnett, May 27, 1907, *ibid.*

⁴¹ *Jackson Evening News*, May 5, 1907.

⁴² Williams to Oliver Eastland, May 27, 1907, in Williams Papers.

⁴³ *Id.* to Wilson S. Hill, May 4, 1907, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Id.* to J. C. McNeill, June 3, 1907, *ibid.*

in the primary. He denied that anyone supporting him had ever, to his knowledge, registered or attempted to register any Negro anywhere. Had he known of such methods he would have objected as quickly as his opponent. He was no more in favor of voting Negroes than was Governor Vardaman, and "every man in the State of Mississippi who has sense enough to shake a mustard shell knows that fact. Anybody who says that any negro has been registered at my instance or knowledge or would be, is a liar." ⁴⁵

On June 10 Williams moved his headquarters to Jackson and hired a larger office staff. Several days were devoted to answering letters. In one of his replies Williams stated that he was having a great deal of trouble getting his literature distributed: "My office force has been badly handled and I am far behind." He recognized that he needed an executive head in his office.⁴⁶ Writing to a supporter at Gloster, Williams stated that he expected his friends in Kemper County to take charge of things for him. "If they do not, it is Mississippi's business they are neglecting and not mine. . . . If Mississippi can stand in the Senate a crank with a hobby, that is Mississippi's affair. Heaven knows I can stand it if she can." ⁴⁷

A number of invitations for return engagements were coming into Williams' office, but he found it imposible to speak in the same place twice during the campaign. Although Williams hoped to make two speeches in each county, he found that in some of them he would be able to make only one. He left his friends to meet his "enemies at the gate, and to carry on the work" for him until the primary. The fatigues of the campaign were beginning to tell on him, and he felt "thoroughly broken down." ⁴⁸

Friends urged Williams to get into the interior and establish more direct contact with the farmers. The Governor

⁴⁵ *Id.* to Hunter S. Williams, June 10, 1907, *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Id.* to Warren Potts, June 10, 1907, *ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Id.* to S. M. Graham, June 10, 1907, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Id.* to N. T. Curtis, June 10, 1907, *ibid.*

had been often invited to address chapters of the Farmers Union. He was posing as the friend of the one-mule farmer and proving it by frequently associating with him. Williams recognized his unfortunate position. He thought, however, that the farmers were too busy. "It would be largely a waste of time. That work will have to come in the latter part of June and throughout July."⁴⁹ He did not believe the country people were supporting Vardaman. Such talk was "just nonsense."⁵⁰ Meanwhile "keep at work, everybody, everywhere."⁵¹

Even though Williams had his campaign outlined in a general way, he rarely scheduled his speeches during the last sixty days more than a week ahead. He was willing to be directed by public opinion. He would go where he was needed most. "I must be guided," said the veteran campaigner, "to a large extent, by the exigencies of the campaign and the movements of my opponents."⁵²

An unusual honor came to Williams in the middle of the contest. He received a commission as colonel on the staff of General Stephen D. Lee, of the Confederate Veterans. Williams expressed his deep appreciation to General Lee by stating that he had tried to do everything both in Congress and outside for the Confederate Veterans. "I was particularly glad to be of service in connection with the bill to mark the graves of the Confederate dead who sleep in Northern soil." Several times in his life Williams had stated that he would never wear an honorary title. This one came "so near being the real thing, that I wear it with pride," he explained.⁵³

The "Miles incident" presents an excellent example of how the actions of politicians may be turned to political

⁴⁹ *Id.* to Bernard Foster, June 10, 1907, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Id.* to Curtis, June 10, 1907, *ibid.*

⁵¹ *Id.* to Foster, June 10, 1907, *ibid.*

⁵² *Id.* to M. A. Tyan, June 10, 1907, *ibid.*

⁵³ *Id.* to General Stephen D. Lee, June 10, 1907, *ibid.* A check for six dollars was enclosed to cover the annual dues and initiation fee.

propaganda in factional politics. Williams, as minority leader, had voted for the retirement pension of General Miles as he had voted for those of all other superannuated officers of the same class. The Vardaman press made much over this vote of Williams. The following headlines appeared: "WILLIAMS MADE A SPEECH IN DEFENSE OF GENERAL MILES"; "WILLIAMS VOTED FOR A PENSION FOR MILES"; "WILLIAMS VOTED FOR AN INCREASE OF MILES PAY"; "WILLIAMS VOTED TO PENSION MILES WHO SHACKLED JEFF DAVIS." All these headlines were declared false by newspapers supporting Williams. The General had stated a number of times, both in public utterances and in private letters, that he reluctantly placed Davis in chains and did so only in obedience to the direct order from his superior in the War Department.⁵⁴ Williams expressed his private opinion of this sort of political ammunition in a letter to a friend. "Tell the first fellow that you hear say that [Miles was retired on full pay] it is a lie and tell him that I said so." ⁵⁵ A public pronouncement was given when, surrounded by admirers in front of the Edwards Hotel at Jackson, the speaker held in his hand a copy of the *Kosciusko Herald* containing an article that began "WILLIAMS VOTED TO PENSION MILES WHO SHACKLED JEFF DAVIS." He glanced at the headlines and remarked: "Isn't it curious that men who are ordinarily honest and scrupulous should become unscrupulous and such nuts when talking politics?" ⁵⁶ Perhaps the greatest aid that Williams received in combating this campaign propaganda was from the pen of a fellow Congressman. Wilson S. Hill wrote a lengthy public letter which gave the Miles incident in full and set forth clearly Williams' connection with it.⁵⁷ This was widely circulated throughout the state.

⁵⁴ Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, June 26, 1907.

⁵⁵ Williams to H. C. Majure, June 10, 1907, in Williams Papers.

⁵⁶ Jackson *Daily News*, June 6, 1907.

⁵⁷ Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, June 26, 1907.

The Brookhaven *Leader* published an article to the effect that Negroes had swarmed into the audience when Williams spoke in Hattiesburg. Williams, enclosing a marked copy of the paper in a letter to F. W. Foote, a leading banker at Hattiesburg, suggested that he write to the *Leader* that the statement was a falsehood; Williams added, "Say it very plainly." A part of this same article declared that a large crowd of Negroes attended the speech which Williams made in Poplarville; Williams declared it "also a lie."⁵⁸ Williams had, in fact, spoken at sessions of court in both places, and the few Negroes in the rear of the courtrooms remained in their seats after the courts adjourned to hear Williams' addresses.⁵⁹ Williams branded another piece of literature untrue when he wrote: "I have never advocated a training school for Negroes. I think that it is about the worst thing that could be given them. I mean by that, the worst in the interest of the white people. It brings them in to competition with white mechanics and artisans."⁶⁰

Vardaman stated in an interview in Hattiesburg on June 28 that "no man can tell what will happen in thirty days, but I feel satisfied that if the election were held tomorrow I would be elected by ten or fifteen thousand votes."⁶¹ Williams all along had approached the primary with a different kind of analysis. A number of letters to people over the state conveyed his belief that his friends were too willing to rest on their oars. It was not until the last fifty days of the campaign that a Williams club was formed anywhere in the state,⁶² and the great majority of them were formed within the last month of the campaign.

Friends of Williams over the state often informed him of the campaign gossip which they had heard. He would usually reply that he was leaving his candidacy in their community

⁵⁸ Williams to F. W. Foote, June 10, 1907, in Williams Papers.

⁵⁹ *Id.* to Hunter S. Williams, June 10, 1907, *ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Id.* to Charles E. Hooker, Jr., June 10, 1907, *ibid.*

⁶¹ Jackson *Daily News*, June 28, 1907.

⁶² See letters of June 3, 1907, in Williams Papers.

in the hands of his friends.⁶³ As he wrote one, he knew that they were on the grounds, that they knew what was going on, and that if they were interested in good government, they would support his candidacy.⁶⁴ "I do not know how to tell you to help me," he wrote another, "except by just telling you to do whatever is well to be done, whenever the occasion arises."⁶⁵

On several occasions during the campaign it seemed almost inevitable that the candidates would be thrown into joint discussion of the campaign issues. Both had been invited to talk early in May at the laying of the cornerstone of the Simpson County Courthouse at Mendenhall. Vardaman appeared first, delivered his talk, and departed. Williams spoke later. In no way could such a meeting have been considered a joint debate. The attempt at Greenville to arrange a meeting of the two candidates under the auspices of the United Daughters of the Confederacy has already been noted. Many friends of both candidates were displeased when they learned that official duties prevented the Governor from accepting the invitation. In the Williams Papers there is evidence of an effort by friends of both men to arrange a joint debate at Centreville on May 30. The Congressman readily accepted the invitation extended by some of the leading citizens of the community. His requirements, in the acceptance, were that the occasion be a real joint debate—the Governor not to be allowed to "make his usual negro speech and then leave under the top-lofty pretense that we are not running against each other."⁶⁶

However, Vardaman appeared, made his speech, and departed unmindful of his scholarly opponent.

As early as April 8 the Jackson *Evening News* stated that Williams had accepted an invitation to appear at Meridian

⁶³ Williams to B. F. Duke, June 10, 1907, *ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Id.* to Thomas Evans, June 10, 1907, *ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Id.* to W. R. Hardy, June 10, 1907, *ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Id.* to L. B. Robinson, May 27, 1907; *id.* to W. P. Field, May 27, 1907; *id.* to W. P. S. Ventress, June 10, 1907, *ibid.*

on July 4, and that arrangements were in process to make the event a gala day.⁶⁷ Pressure was brought to bear upon the Governor. Some of his friends were beginning to surmise that perhaps "official duties at the governor's desk" did not really constitute the reason why their chief had not accepted Williams' challenges. Was not the Governor making several speeches over the state each week? Why could not at least one joint debate be arranged? The Williams men were boasting with telling effect that Vardaman was afraid.

Joint debates had been customary in Mississippi between candidates for the United States Senate. George and Barksdale, McLaurin and Allen, and Money and Longino had spoken from the same platform during previous senatorial campaigns. Many leading dailies began to use very plain language in saying that the people of the state expected and demanded a debate between Williams and Vardaman. On June 26 the Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger* quoted the Governor as stating that he would meet Williams in joint debate on July 4 at Meridian. This paper stated that Vardaman had even accepted the terms proposed by Williams of "one and a half hours each, with a short rejoinder." The article, in conclusion, said that the people wanted "a stand-up, give and take affair that [they] . . . may judge as to the caliber, temperament and general qualifications of the candidates."⁶⁸

The attention of the entire state was turned toward Meridian on July 4. Fully twenty thousand visitors thronged the city.⁶⁹ Many papers throughout the South had reporters present, as did *Collier's National Weekly*, which was represented by one of its most promising young reporters, Frederick A. Palmer, accompanied by a photographer.

⁶⁷ Jackson *Evening News*, April 8, 1907.

⁶⁸ Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, June 26, 1907.

⁶⁹ The facts in regard to the joint debate at Meridian were secured from the files of the Jackson *Daily News*, July 5-11, 1907; Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, July 5-11, 1907; and the Natchez *Daily Democrat*, July 5-11, 1907. Each of these papers had a reporter at the debate.

President Samuel A. Neville of the Meridian Board of Trade acted as master of ceremonies. He launched immediately into a ten-minute introductory speech in which he informed the audience of the program of the day. The final agreement for the debate stipulated two hours each for the candidates, with rejoinders of fifteen minutes each. Williams was to open the debate; Vardaman was to have the last rejoinder. The Governor contended to the last for the privilege of making his speech first; he did not want a rejoinder.

Williams began his speech by renewing his almost daily invitation to the Governor to meet him in a series of joint debates during the rest of the campaign. His opponent was running on a platform which declared for the repeal of the Fifteenth Amendment of the Constitution and the modification of the Fourteenth. Handing the Governor a copy of the Constitution and a pencil, Williams requested that he modify the amendment as he would do when he reached the Senate. Williams further embarrassed the Governor by reading a letter which the latter had written in 1903, in which he testified to the ability and character of the former and predicted that Williams would "one day rank with the great Senators of America."⁷⁰ Then Representative Williams spent most of his two hours discussing some of the national problems of the day.

Most of the Governor's speech was taken up with a bitter recounting of stories of Negro crimes and the suggestion that Williams was trying to obscure the main issue—the repeal of the Fifteenth Amendment—by talking about other issues, such as government ownership.

"I have here before me a speech in which Mr. Bryan declares that government ownership is not an issue in the program of the Democratic Party," said Vardaman.

"Show me the speech," promptly demanded Williams.

⁷⁰ James K. Vardaman to Charles S. Elliot, September 25, 1903, in Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, July 14, 1907.

After a few minutes of fumbling among his notes the Governor said: "I thought I had it with me but I haven't."

"Then tell me where he made the speech," demanded Williams.

The Chief Executive became embarrassed, turned a livid red, and stammered that Bryan had made it when at Jackson in the executive mansion.

"Oh, then it was not a public utterance," commented Williams.

The Governor a few minutes later, talking of the same issue, pretended to be quoting a newspaper clipping of a speech Williams had made on the same subject at Parkersburg, West Virginia, the preceding fall. He had read only a few lines when Williams suddenly interrupted him:

"Let me see the paper."

Reluctantly, the Governor granted the request.

"There is no such article here," announced Williams.

The rest of the Governor's speech was devoted to the race problem, for he wished to assure his own recognition as the anti-Negro leader in Mississippi.

In Williams' rejoinder he stated that his opponent had drawn great pictures of Negro criminology and Negro crimes and had taken for granted that the audience were "fools enough to suppose that the Fifteenth Amendment had something to do with crime." That amendment had nothing whatsoever to do with crime, and its repeal would furnish no real hope. Even if Negroes could read and write, there would still be a majority of white voters in the state. Because many of the Negroes annually moved from plantation to plantation, they failed to meet residence requirements. Had not Senator James Z. George ensured white supremacy by inserting in the constitution of 1890 a provision which required a registration fee of three dollars and which necessitated registration nine months before an election?

The Governor, in his rejoinder, was interrupted when

he attempted to quote his opponent. Near the close of his speech Williams had stated that he would give his left hand to secure the repeal of the Fifteenth Amendment. The Governor exclaimed, "Mr. Williams stated that he would give his right hand to secure the repeal—"

"Hold on," exclaimed a man in the crowd. "Williams said his 'left hand'; quote him correctly."

After regaining his composure Vardaman dwelt the rest of his time on his efforts as Governor to prevent the Negro from securing any of the state funds for education. Frederick Palmer commented that "the campaign was being fought with argument and emotion" as Vardaman had made the Negro the fighting issue, once more arousing the embers of old fires to flame.⁷¹ He hoped by this to carry the "Vardaman Idea" to Washington.

From his seat near the rostrum Fred Sullens was able to contrast the two speakers: "One is the master of debate; the other is unacquainted with its elemental principles. One is an orator; the other merely an elocutionist. One is a trained statesman; the other is a politician.

"Summed up in a nut shell . . . Williams debated, Vardaman harangued. Williams argued, Vardaman perpetrated sophistry. Williams enunciated wholesome truths and irrefutable facts; Vardaman sought to escape responsibility for thoughtless remarks of former years. . . . Williams dwelt with practical things in a practical and statesmanlike manner; Vardaman tried to convince the crowd that he could accomplish impossible things. Williams showed an intimate acquaintance with national legislation; Vardaman revealed himself a mere tyro without even casual acquaintance with the business of lawmaking."⁷²

⁷¹ Frederick Palmer, "Williams versus Vardaman at Meridian," in *Collier's National Weekly* (New York), XLI (July 27, 1907). It is interesting to note that both Williams' and Vardaman's headquarters publicly condemned this article because of derogatory statements made about the Governor. No Yankee reporter could take sides in a Mississippi Democratic family fight.

⁷² Jackson *Daily News*, July 5, 1907. See also Natchez *Daily Democrat*, July 6, 1907.

Vardaman claimed publicly that he had not received a square deal at Meridian. His complaints were that his request for a speech with no rejoinder was not agreed to; that during his rejoinder he was rudely interrupted when he attempted to answer Williams; and that all press reports of the debate were censored in the interest of Williams, an accusation for which there was apparently no proof.⁷³ The Meridian Board of Trade adopted resolutions which reviewed the negotiations, arrangements, and program of the day. The Board regretted the Governor's stand and saw no justification for it.⁷⁴

With the passing of the debate at Meridian one feature of the campaign was over. Williams renewed his efforts to arrange similar meetings, but Vardaman completely ignored them. Both candidates continued to make regular speeches.

At the request of Williams' supporters at Raymond an early morning Yazoo and Mississippi Valley train made a fifteen-minute stop so that Williams could make a short talk from the rear platform. This incident brought criticism from a Vardaman paper: "The passengers aboard were not consulted and some at least were unwilling listeners, but could not help themselves, as it was ordered by the railroad management."⁷⁵ The obvious conclusion was that the railroads were favoring Williams' candidacy.

Vardaman's shifting position on the matter of railroad ownership and on other issues led Williams to adopt for his political text, "Verily, verily, he remaineth not hitched to the post whereunto he did'st earlier hitch himself." In a speech at Utica⁷⁶ and several times later in his campaign

⁷³ Jackson *Daily News*, July 7, 1907.

⁷⁴ Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, July 18, 1907.

⁷⁵ Natchez *Bulletin*, quoted in Jackson *Daily News*, July 13, 1907. The *Daily News* answered this accusation by declaring it to be "just another plain lie."

⁷⁶ Samuel G. Osborn, the writer's father, who heard Williams on this occasion, recalled that he wore a long black coat, gray trousers, white vest, white stiff-bosomed shirt with a high collar, and a black tie—a very aristocratic costume for a Mississippi politician in a campaign in the heat of summer.

he reproached the Governor's inconsistency to advantage. Williams' method was to apply the test of logical reasoning and lead one along "until he saw with perfect clearness not only the lack of wisdom, but the danger and even absolute certainty of disaster as the sure result," "if the policies of his opponent were adopted.

At Utica, Williams tried again to make his public service the issue of the contest by remarking, "Governor Vardaman says that if he could not get a senatorship without attacking my public record he would spurn the office." Williams scoffed at the idea because he was sure that if the Governor could criticize his record, "he would be right out in front with the criticism." Williams assured his listeners that if there were any defects in his record, they were of the head, not of the heart, and that they had not been "deflections of Southern ideals and principles."⁷⁸

One approach almost invariably used by politicians of the Lower South to appeal to the "red necks" is the "poor boy" plea. "Vardaman used to be a plowboy," read a circular. Williams made note of this: "Well, what has that got to do with it? I'll bet every dollar I have that if Jim Vardaman ever plowed he quit it as soon as he could."⁷⁹ The *Natchez Bulletin* stated: "John was surely born with a 'silver spoon in his mouth,' while Vardaman had to be content with a spoon of any kind."⁸⁰

The report was circulated that Williams was intoxicated when he spoke on July 19 at Hermanville. Several letters were published declaring the report absolutely false and slanderous.⁸¹ A second accusation of intoxication related to the time of the delivery of a speech at Mississippi College in Clinton.⁸² A public letter from Dr. William T. Lowery,

⁷⁷ J. B. Dudley to Fred Sullens, July 12, 1907, quoted in *Jackson Daily News*, July 13, 1907.

⁷⁸ *Jackson Daily News*, July 13, 1907.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*

⁸¹ *Jackson Daily Clarion-Ledger*, July 21, 1907.

⁸² Canton (Miss.) *Madison County Herald*, July 19, 1907, quoted in *Natchez Daily Democrat*, July 23, 1907.

then president of the college, declared the statement to be without foundation.⁸³

Throughout the campaign there was much out-of-state interest manifested. Williams' record as Congressman and as Democratic minority leader had caught the interest of the nation. Vardaman, unique in appearance, had aroused national curiosity by his fiery speeches against Negroes, his demand for repeal of the Reconstruction amendments, and his progressive administration as Governor. Senator Samuel D. McEnery of Louisiana said in the press that if Williams would make his home in Louisiana, "I will resign my seat in his favor." The *Baltimore Sun* urged the South to be represented in the Senate by "men of culture, of political and economic knowledge and of sound judgment."⁸⁴ Letters were written from many parts of the country urging the nomination of Williams.⁸⁵ Tom Watson, former leader of southern Populists, mailed letters into Mississippi advocating the support of Governor Vardaman; the Georgian declared that "if the honorable John Sharp Williams should win out in the fight with Governor Vardaman the corporations would have just one more doodle-bug in the United States Senate. . . . Would I dare say this if the record didn't justify me? . . . The official record of John Sharp Williams proves that he belongs to the Wall Street element of the Democratic party."⁸⁶

In retrospect it appears lamentable that Governor Vardaman did not wage the campaign on a comparative record basis. His administration was not so radical on the race problem as the fact that he had gone into office on a platform of bitter hatred of the Negro would seem to indicate. In his inaugural address the Governor had alluded to his

⁸³ Quoted in *Natchez Daily Democrat*, July 23, 1907.

⁸⁴ Quoted in *Jackson Daily Clarion-Ledger*, July 25, 1907.

⁸⁵ See files of *Jackson Daily News*, *Jackson Daily Clarion-Ledger*, and *Natchez Daily Democrat*, during July, 1907.

⁸⁶ *Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine*, quoted in *Jackson Daily News*, July 26, 1907.

solution of the race problem—a solution which he was to make the leading issue in his campaign for the Senate three years later. He felt that the amendments to the Federal Constitution that gave the Negro rights as citizens had been a great mistake. “The nation should correct this error, this stupendous solecism,” he said, “and now is the time to do it. . . . The Southern people should take the initiative. They are familiar with all the facts, they alone are capable of informing the world of the profound, God-stamped, time-fixed and unalterable incompetency of the negro for citizenship in a white man’s country.”⁸⁷ The new Governor advocated improvement of highways, encouragement of immigration and agriculture, investment of foreign capital, ample support of education for all white children, and better care of Confederate veterans and their families.

Early in his administration two agricultural experiment stations were established in the state. Progress was made toward the conservation and preservation of wild life. A commission was appointed to codify the laws of the state. Under the Governor’s leadership a campaign was launched which resulted in stopping the terrible menace of yellow fever. “Partisan politics should be absolutely eliminated from the penitentiary management,” said the Governor. “The penitentiary farms should be the model farms of the State. They should be used to demonstrate on a large scale the advantages to the farmers of experiments made at the Agricultural and Mechanical College on a small scale.”⁸⁸ George Creel summed up Vardaman’s administration by saying that he “gave Mississippi the best administration in its history.”⁸⁹ During Vardaman’s term as governor, Ray

⁸⁷ *Mississippi Senate Journal*, 1904 (Nashville, 1904), 114–127. Excerpts quoted in Dunbar Rowland, *History of Mississippi, The Heart of the South* (Chicago, 1925), II, 302.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 302–12.

⁸⁹ George Creel, “The Carnival of Corruption in Mississippi,” in *Cosmopolitan Magazine* (New York), LI (1911), 728.

Stannard Baker made an extended visit to Mississippi and later wrote: "In spite of the bitterness against Vardaman among some of the best people of Mississippi I heard no one accuse him of corruption in any department of his administration. On the whole, they said he had directed the business of the state with judgment."⁹⁰

On the evening of July 31 both factions held big political rallies in Jackson.⁹¹ The primary was held the next day. The weather was ideal, and the Governor's faction, which was stronger with the country voters, was favored.

The *Daily News* on August 2 claimed that Williams was nominated by at least 12,000 majority; the *Daily Democrat* on the same day stated that "Mississippi stood redeemed," and indicated in large headlines that the returns of the primary had given a "LANDSLIDE FOR WILLIAMS." On August 3, however, these papers presented quite different claims; now they stated that returns from 64 counties gave Vardaman a majority of 162. The headquarters of both candidates were claiming, as late as August 5, victories for their candidates by a majority of over 1,500 votes.⁹²

On the night of August 2 an unusual celebration occurred at the Governor's mansion. A crowd of several thousand assembled in front of the building and demanded the Governor's presence. The "White Chief" made a victory address from the front porch. After the address the crowd rushed to the porch to shake hands with and congratulate the victor. Instantly the halls and parlors of the mansion were overflowing with surging masses of elated Mississippians. The Governor was "cheered for thirty minutes."⁹³

By August 3 some friends of Vardaman were talking of having re-counts in several of the counties where returns

⁹⁰ Ray Stannard Baker, "The Negro in American Politics," in *American Magazine* (New York), LXVI (1908), 172-73.

⁹¹ Jackson *Daily News*, August 1, 1907.

⁹² *Ibid.*, August 2-5, 1907; Natchez *Daily Democrat*, August 1-5, 1907.

⁹³ Natchez *Daily Democrat*, August 3, 1907.

had been contrary to the anticipations of the Governor's headquarters.⁹⁴ Reports of fraud were widely circulated.⁹⁵ From the Williams headquarters on August 5 went forth to all election managers in every precinct in the state, a telegram which read as follows: "Do not let the ballots or the original tally sheets go out of the hands of the election officers. We have won this election and do not propose to be counted out."⁹⁶ The rumored re-count did not materialize. The press reported the burning of ballots in Copiah, Simpson, and Tallahatchie counties,⁹⁷ all of which had given Vardaman substantial majorities.⁹⁸

The result of the primary was in doubt until the Democratic State Executive Committee met in the hall of the House of Representatives on the morning of August 8.⁹⁹ The honesty and reputation of the white Democrats of Mississippi were certainly at stake. Regardless of which was decided to be the official nominee by the Executive Committee, many of the leading citizens realized the gravity of the situation. It must not be said that the Democratic party of Mississippi could not conduct an honest election. The Executive Committee carefully examined and tabulated the returns from all the counties, accepting unofficial returns from four counties that had not sent in official returns. Upon the conclusion of the tabulation the chairman of the committee announced that John Sharp Williams had been nominated for the Senate by a majority of 648 votes out of the total 118,344 votes cast. The crowd dispersed immediately after the nomination was declared. The Governor sent a note to the committee:

"I accept the arbitrament . . . without a tinge of resent-

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, August 6, 1907; *Jackson Daily News*, August 3, 1907.

⁹⁵ *Jackson Daily News*, August 7, 1907.

⁹⁶ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, August 6, 1907; *Jackson Daily Clarion-Ledger*, August 6, 1907.

⁹⁷ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, August 8, 1907.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ For accounts of the situation, report on committee meeting, etc., see *ibid.*, August 7-9, 1907; *Jackson Daily News*, August 8, 1907; *Jackson Daily Clarion-Ledger*, August 7-9, 1907.



SENATORIAL COURTESY IN MISSISSIPPI

FROM THE WASHINGTON *Evening Star*, AUGUST 7, 1907.

Permission of Berryman of Washington Evening Star

ment or of regret for anything done or said by me or said by my friends during the campaign. . . . I have made the campaign on living, important, pertinent principles, . . . I am thoroughly convinced that the large majority of the white Democrats of the state agree with my views upon public questions, . . . I want . . . [my friends] to feel as I do that we have not been defeated but [that] victory is only postponed for a season.”¹⁰⁰

While half the people of the state were disappointed with the result, all agreed with the *Daily Democrat* that “the agony is over.”¹⁰¹

Press comment on the results of the Mississippi primary was nationwide.¹⁰² The New York *World* believed Mississippi to be “doubly fortunate in Governor Vardaman’s defeat, and John Sharp Williams’ nomination.” The Houston *Post* declared: “Mississippi is to be congratulated.” The conclusions of three dailies from the national capital are worthy of note. The *Post* was of the opinion that the outcome was very significant in its connections with the national Democratic situation, in that conservatism and not radicalism should rule the party. The *Herald* stated that Mississippi had done “herself credit.” The *Star* characterized the result as “a triumph of intelligence over fustian; of demonstrated capacity over pretense; of a real performer over a mere poseur.” The Atlanta *Constitution*, a paper long noted for its high conservative rating in the journalistic world, rejoiced that “A state possessing the conservatism, the refinement and the culture of Mississippi was not content to be represented in the highest law-making body in the country by a fire-eater and a fanatic.” The Birmingham *Ledger* concluded that the United States Senate was not the place for the Vardaman and Tillman style of oratory.

The Republican press of the country likewise recognized Williams as the abler of the two men. The Philadelphia

¹⁰⁰ Natchez *Daily Democrat*, August 9, 1907.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² These excerpts were quoted in *ibid.*, August 14, 1907.

Bulletin stated that the sending of Vardaman to the Senate would be "disgraceful to the people of any state in the Union." The *Wheeling Intelligencer* rejoiced in the victory of the conservative Democrat over a "noisy radical, full of fantastic ideas and strange notions." The *Minneapolis Tribune* saw in the defeat of the "fire-eating" Governor "a plain step in the healthful evolution of the South."

The Democratic primary of 1907 was a severe test of the direct primary system in Mississippi.¹⁰³ In this state, as in other states that have only one party actively engaged in politics, nomination in the primary is equivalent to election. This statement is so utterly true that after the primary is over, no further campaigning is ever done. In the general election in November only 25 to 40 per cent of the vote cast in the August primary is ever recorded. The Mississippi Constitution required, as did the Federal Constitution at that time, that the legislative body elect the United States Senators. In keeping with that provision, the legislature in session on January 12, 1908, duly elected Williams to the United States Senate for a term of six years beginning on March 4, 1911. Williams was present at the joint meeting of the two houses and formally accepted the election with an address appropriate to the occasion.

Soon after the primary was over, Williams declared that he would retire from the House at the expiration of his term in March, 1909.¹⁰⁴ He wanted to spend two years in study and further preparation for his service to his state and the Democratic party in the Senate.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, August 9, 1907.

¹⁰⁴ *Jackson Daily News*, August 10, 1907.

Chapter IX

A MINORITY SENATOR UNDER TAFT

ALTHOUGH the Republicans with a majority of ten in the Senate had a safe majority as party lines usually go, 1911 was no usual year in national politics. On November 8, 1910, the Democrats had succeeded in gaining control of the House, as Williams had predicted.¹ It was to be a workable majority—228 to 162. As a result of the election, the Senate had ten new members. Of the fifty-one members of the Republican majority, thirteen were insurgents, who had, if not a well-organized group within the Republican party, at least a clear understanding among themselves. Their demand for proportionate representation on all committees² was met in most cases, but only because the stand-patters recognized that the insurgents had the balance of power.

President Taft, "with an aggressive energy unusual in him, less than a half an hour after the old Session ended issued a call for a special one, to meet April 5, 1911."³ The reason was the failure of a Republican Senate to ratify the President's trade agreement with Canada. The House, although Democratic, was also called because the trade agreement involved customs duties.

The first appearance of Williams in the Senate was at this special session. Eighteen years earlier, in 1893, he had entered the House in a special session called by Cleveland. Since 1909 this newcomer had been "rusticating on the

¹ Jackson *Daily News*, March 21, 1910.

² New York *Times*, April 4, 1911.

³ Sullivan, *Our Times*, IV, 398.

farm, listening to the birds sing and living the simple life.”⁴ Although he did not seem a day older than when he had left Washington, his hair appeared to be a little grayer, and at a distance, looked as though “it had been cuddled into shape by the eider duck.” His mustache was “a little scraggier” and drooped “like moss of the trees of the Southern swamps.” His mouth looked as if it had “been lured away by heavy cuds of tobacco or big cigars.” Clear eyes, just as bright and all-seeing as ever, pierced through gold-rimmed glasses over clothes that “needed to be pressed just as much as ever.” His girth had expanded till he seemed “at all times well-fed.” Mentally he had grown even sharper—“till he should be known now as John Sharper Williams.”⁵

One of the many customs of the Senate is that no new member shall address his fellow members of that august body during the first session in which he holds membership. Williams was not “any more impressed apparently with the sacred traditions of the Senate than he was with the sacred traditions of the House.”⁶ One reporter noted that he was wearing his senatorial dignity “with the nonchalance with which he wears the bow of his black tie around under his left ear.”⁷ On May 23 he stated, “I had not intended to open my mouth at this session of the Senate of the United States, but it seems to me that it is necessary that my own position upon this question should be made clear.”⁸ The question was the proposed amendment to the Federal Constitution giving the people of the states the power to elect directly their Senators.

Senator Elihu Root of New York believed that the very power and authority of the government would be undermined if the people accepted this amendment, unless the

⁴ Jackson *Daily News*, April 21, 1910.

⁵ Samuel G. Blythe, “The Gentleman from Mississippi,” in *Saturday Evening Post*, July 22, 1911; Homer Davenport, “John Sharp Williams,” in *Jackson Daily News*, August 10, 1911. Williams did not chew tobacco, and always spoke of it as a filthy habit.

⁶ Blythe, “The Gentleman from Mississippi,” in *loc. cit.*, July 22, 1911.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 1 Sess., 1485.

national government retained control over these elections. William E. Borah of Idaho, concluding a first term of his long and brilliant senatorial career, stated that much good would come from the active interest of the people in their government. Williams held that the people had not gone rapidly into this reformation; they had been considering it for a long time. He felt that the Senate had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. His faith in the electorate would not permit him to believe that there would be any deterioration of the intellectual ability of the Senate personnel if the proposed amendment were adopted. He did concede that a certain element occupying a conspicuous place in their midst would be greatly decreased, because the people had concluded that this element was represented entirely too much.⁹

After this initial speech of about five hundred words Williams "retired to the cloakroom and his corncob pipe."¹⁰ The debate continued for several days, but he participated in it further only to the extent of asking Senator Weldon B. Heyburn of Idaho whether he believed that nineteen states had requested a constitutional convention because they thought the Senate would not approve direct election of its members.¹¹ The joint resolution of the House was amended and passed by the Senate; the former refused the amendments and the latter insisted on them, with the result that the resolution died in conference.¹²

In the next session of Congress the House accepted the Senate contentions. Some of the members of both houses from the Lower South bitterly opposed the resolution, for they saw in the provision which gave the Federal govern-

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1482. A similar resolution proposing a constitutional amendment had come within four votes of adoption by the Senate during the last session of the Sixty-first Congress, and subsequently ten new members had entered that body. Senator Benjamin L. Bristow of Kansas had been informed, he stated, that a majority of the new members favored the enactment of the proposed measure.

¹⁰ Blythe, "The Gentleman from Mississippi," in *loc. cit.*, July 22, 1911.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1540.

¹² *Ibid.*, Index, H.J.R. 39.

ment supervision over senatorial elections a return to Reconstruction practices. Williams was not among the opposition. Even if the popular election of Senators did carry with it Federal control of general elections, the states would retain control of the Democratic primaries, and these constituted the real elections in the "solid South." The states made short order of ratifying this proposed amendment.

The Democratic program called for the adoption of a reciprocity agreement with Canada during the special session.¹³ Since the Democrats agreed upon the enactment of this measure, it passed the lower house in less than three weeks. Before the close of April the bill was in the Finance Committee of the Senate, where it remained until June 8. A motion made in the committee by Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts to report favorably the Canadian reciprocity bill was lost by a vote of eight to six. Of the six voting for the measure three were Democrats—William J. Stone of Missouri, John W. Kern of Indiana, and Williams; and three were Republicans—Boies Penrose of Pennsylvania, Shelby M. Cullom of Illinois, and Lodge.¹⁴ On June 13 Penrose reported the bill without recommendation, and Williams presented a report which he had prepared for the three Democratic members of the minority.¹⁵

It seemed that Mississippi had joined hands with Massachusetts and Pennsylvania in favoring the proposed legislation. Williams said that he did not much like the company he was in but that he would travel with them as long as they were going in the right direction, toward a downward revision of tariff duties.¹⁶ When he was chided for defending

¹³ *New York Times*, April 4, 1911.

¹⁴ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 1 Sess., 1964.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1962. For an excellent discussion of Canadian reciprocity see Lewis E. Ellis, *Reciprocity, 1911; A Study in Canadian-American Relations* (New Haven, 1939), especially pp. 111-40; and Henry F. Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft* (New York, 1939), II, 582-602.

¹⁶ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 1 Sess., 2297. Although the Canadian reciprocity bill was not combined with tariff bills then before the Senate, Williams in his remarks addressed himself to the tariff question in general.

the Republican President, Williams answered that when Taft had a lucid interval on the policy of protection, it was wise to support him, whereas the Republican Senators felt more like "hitting him over the head with a club."¹⁷ The debates on Canadian reciprocity and the tariff question lasted from June 12 until the middle of July.¹⁸

Williams spoke several times during the tariff controversy. He sarcastically traced the evolution of the historical basis upon which the Republicans had advocated protection. The emphasis had been placed in turn upon (1) payment by the foreigner, (2) building up of infant industries, (3) equalization of labor prices in foreign and domestic manufacturing, (4) comparative infertility of American soil, (5) comparatively greater nutritiousness of Canadian grass, and (6) inefficient but highly paid American labor. The last three of these bases had been used before the Finance Committee as having applied to the Canadian reciprocity measure.¹⁹ Williams remarked that if someone would inform him in just what business a witness was engaged, where he lived, and with what political party he was affiliated, he would write the testimony of that witness before the Finance Committee.

Charles Curtis reminded Williams that in 1894 he had voted for the Wilson bill, which placed wool on the free list, and that he was now taking the opposite view. Several days later Williams revealed an inconsistent statement made by Senator Cummins. He interrupted the Iowan to read from the latter's inaugural address as Governor, which was delivered on January 14, 1904. "Visibly confused by the interruption, Senator Cummins attempted to minimize

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2290.

¹⁸ During one of these debates Williams was seen to stick his head into the Senate through the door of the Democratic cloakroom. He took a calm and contemplative look around the room. A corn-cob pipe squatted between his teeth and little rings of smoke filled the air as he "dodged back to his chair in the cloakroom." See Blythe, "The Gentleman from Mississippi," in *loc. cit.*, July 22, 1911.

¹⁹ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 1 Sess., 2385-89.

the effect of the Williams disclosure by saying that conditions had materially changed in Canada since 1904.”²⁰ Williams tried to allay Cummins’ embarrassment and explain his own inconsistencies by saying that any man ought to change his opinion whenever he found good reason to do so.²¹

On June 29 Williams gave as his program for his party in the economic field: the regulation of taxation in accordance with the needs of the government, the divorcement of government from big business and big business from government, and the adoption of a policy which would prove that the government was not a silent partner in any firm or private business.²² “The very A B C of political reform, he later stated, must consist in the divorce of government from ‘big business’ and of ‘big business’ from ‘big politics.’ ”²³

The Democratic party, though not in power in both houses of Congress, had resolved to conduct itself in the special session so as to eliminate the old familiar adage that it might be trusted to “make a fool of itself.”²⁴ In the early part of July the Senate witnessed a departure from this good resolution, much to the delight of the Republicans.

The reciprocity issue was still under discussion when Senator Joseph W. Bailey, for many years considered one of the leading members of the Democratic party, began an intraparty debate. This debate was due, perhaps, to several things. Bailey and Williams had disagreed over some features of Democratic tariff policy since the Cleveland Administration. Bailey had been recognized as party leader in the Senate, and that leadership was now being challenged by the newcomer from Mississippi. The Texan resented the aggressiveness and frequency with which Williams was speaking in his initial session. Finally, Bailey, though

²⁰ *Jackson Daily News*, June 30, 1911.

²¹ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 1 Sess., 2586.

²² *Ibid.*, 2591.

²³ Williams, *Thomas Jefferson*, 159.

²⁴ *New York Times*, April 4, 1911.

younger by a few years than Williams, was much older in legislative experience, and recognized his inability to follow the political progressiveness of the period. For all these reasons he took issue with Williams in the final stages of the discussion of the reciprocity bill. Throughout the heated encounter lasting several days, both pledged a continuation of their intimate personal friendship and insisted that the debate was entirely one of political policies.

Clearly Bailey, in this debate, was in the minority because he was attacking the policy agreed upon by the Democratic caucus. Williams wanted to accept the reduction of a protective duty on importation anywhere the opportunity presented itself. The chief line of argument in the long debate was in regard to the importation of free raw materials, a question on which Williams took the affirmative. Bailey opposed the adoption of this "Cleveland heresy" and accused Bryan of instigating the adoption of the policy.²⁵ His argument was that whereas the protective tariff taxed the consumer it was justifiable to have a tax upon raw materials in order to tax the manufacturers. He accused Democrats who favored the free importation of raw materials of being under the control of trusts. He pointedly asked Williams to note that Penrose, Lodge, Root, and the overwhelming majority of the standpat Republicans would vote with the Mississippian. Bailey attested that he was still a party man but that he would never swallow his own opinions to retain his affiliations with any political group. After Bailey had spent much time delving into the Democratic tariff history, especially the history of the Walker Tariff of 1846, he stated that Democrats had never advocated free raw materials until the Cleveland era.

The lengthy reply of Williams was focused on two points. He held that a tax on raw materials was not a tax on the manufacturer, for the manufacturer charged it to the cost

²⁵ Sam H. Acheson, *Joe Bailey, The Last Democrat* (New York, 1932), 251, 305.

of production, and the tax was ultimately paid by the consuming public. In reply to the statement that the Democratic doctrine of free raw materials was a "Cleveland heresy," Williams presented evidence that it was advocated by Albert Gallatin, Robert J. Walker, and James Guthrie, secretaries of the Treasury under Jefferson, Madison, Polk, and Franklin Pierce. He cited as a fourth example Roger Mills, who had advocated free raw materials before the Cleveland era. After giving these historical facts to support his argument, Williams concluded that neither a tariff upon all raw materials nor their free importation was a "hard and fast Democratic doctrine." The Republicans were very much amused at the heated discussion between the two southern Senators.²⁶

A reporter vividly contrasted these two speakers. Bailey was a handsome, powerfully built man, over six feet in height and weighing more than two hundred pounds. Williams weighed less than one hundred and fifty pounds; and, standing erect, he was not more than five feet nine inches tall. He was a very homely man but had a genial aptitude for making friends. Bailey, on the contrary, had more of a genius for making enemies. He excited admiration, but his apparent arrogance also provoked hatred. Bailey orated; Williams talked. The Texan's action showed carefully studied poses; the Mississippian's manner was as "democratic as a coon-skin cap."²⁷

The reciprocity agreement with Canada as finally enacted contained the principles advocated by Williams. Although passed by the American Congress and strongly supported by President Taft, the efforts for reciprocal Canadian trade legislation came to nought. The Canadian government called a special election on the measure. The people de-

²⁶ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 1 Sess., 2758-2827. Bailey, born in Mississippi, had moved to Texas. Williams, a native of Tennessee, had migrated to Mississippi.

²⁷ "Savoyard," "Williams and Bailey," in *Jackson Daily News*, August 9, 1911.

feated the Liberal party, which had negotiated the agreement, and the new Conservative Parliament, in keeping with its campaign pledge, refused to enact any reciprocal trade law.

Two incidents occurred during the early part of Williams' senatorial career which set forth his attitude in regard to the War Between the States. In the special session in 1911, Williams attempted to secure the retention in the Senate's employ of Jim Jones, an eighty-two-year-old Negro who had been the bodyguard of Jefferson Davis. Jim had been employed as a laborer, but for two years had been unable to work. The appeal was made on purely sentimental lines. Senator Heyburn was at that time the greatest, if not the only, waver of the "bloody shirt" in the Senate. He "was very bitter in his denunciation of everything pertaining to the Confederacy."²⁸ In reply to the request of Williams to retain the aged Negro on the payroll the Senator from Idaho spoke of the southern cause as "infamous." Several southern Senators sprang to their feet, but Williams was recognized. To those who were privileged to witness the scene, he appeared to be trembling with emotion and bravely striving to keep control of his anger. His face revealed the battle which the Southerner was waging with himself.²⁹ He replied that his respect for parliamentary rules was all that prevented him from saying what he actually felt toward a human being "that harbored such thoughts in his heart." Senator William Smith, a Michigan Republican and the son of a Federal soldier, said that he had been in public life for nearly seventeen years, and during the time he had never known a southern soldier who fought on the side of the Confederacy to object to a pension for a worthy Union soldier. A vote was quickly taken, and Jones was retained. The Senate immediately recessed.³⁰ Williams was noticed to be

²⁸ Dunn, *From Harrison to Harding*, II, 156.

²⁹ Jackson *Daily News*, July 13, 1911.

³⁰ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 1 Sess., 2891-97.

still trembling with anger, and Heyburn quickly disappeared from the Senate Chamber.³¹

The second incident occurred early in 1912 when Williams introduced a bill which provided for a Confederate naval monument to be erected in the Vicksburg National Park.³² Again Heyburn strongly opposed the measure. Williams appealed only to the sentiment and brotherly love of the Republican majority of the Senate. If the Senate would allow the bill to be voted upon, Williams would request that no southern-born Senator now representing the South vote upon the measure. He was perfectly willing to leave it entirely to the northern members of the body. Heyburn opposed this plea: "That bill is as red with the bloody sentiment that actuated those men who now seek to dip their hands in the Treasury of the United States as though it had been under the bleeding, gaping wounds of the patriots of the North upon the battlefield. . . . Can you not let that ghost lie dead in its grave and be content to think what you please of the issue . . . ? Do you think we have no graveyards crowded with the memories of our own people. . . ?" ³³

Williams thought he was certainly too insignificant and inoffensive a creature to be charged with treading or endeavoring to tread on the sacred memories in the minds of the North. "In fact, if the Senator from Idaho knew me better, he would know that I frequently step out of my way upon the sidewalk to keep from treading upon an ant. . . . I would not want to tread out even the public service of the Senator from Idaho, if I could." Had not the people of the South been a part of the United States ever since its formation except for four years? Had not the South placed its proportionate share of money in the Federal Treasury? Did it not belong proportionately to the South as well as to the North? Heyburn interrupted with the question,

³¹ *Jackson Daily News*, July 13, 1911.

³² *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 2 Sess., 1721-22.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1723.

"Does not the principle [of secession] come to us as an inheritance and devolve upon us as the duty of standing by it?" Williams replied, amid laughter and applause from both the Senate and the galleries, that "when a man inherits more than his father feels, he is inheriting too much." An earlier bill had appropriated \$200,000 for the erection of a monument to the Federal navy in the same park,³⁴ but there was to be no appropriation commemorating the Confederate navy during the Sixty-second Congress.

By 1912 those in America who were posted on international events knew that there were a number of indications of international chaos. In order to avert international warfare or, if not able to avert it, to remain aloof from it, Senators and others were advocating arbitration treaties between the United States and European nations. President Roosevelt had negotiated such treaties with England and France, and President Taft had urged the Senate to ratify arbitration treaties that had been signed with those powers in 1911.

A statement made by Lodge, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is of peculiar interest because of a different position which he took subsequently in his senatorial career. In speaking on February 29 the member from Massachusetts stated in part: "Party politics, as a rule, have been conspicuously absent from the action of the Senate in regard to our foreign relations. They have been entirely absent since I have been in the Senate. . . . We have often been divided upon the questions submitted to us, but never upon party lines, nor, so far as I could judge, for political purposes. We have always adhered to the principle laid down by Webster when he said that his politics 'ceased at the water's edge!' " ³⁵ The policy of arbitration was to be utilized as far as it was practicable. Lodge did not believe, however, that he could go quite as far as the President's treaties provided.

Williams desired to answer Lodge extemporaneously as

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1723-24.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2599.

soon as the Senator had completed his argument in opposition to Taft's arbitration treaties. He was informed, however, that the list of members to speak that day had been arranged, and could not be altered. To answer at a later day was not Williams' way of debating. He often referred to the Senate rule which provided such procedure as very destructive to free debate. Williams sometimes sarcastically called the list of speakers the "Holy List."³⁶ It was not until almost a week later, on March 5, that the Mississippian was permitted the privilege of replying to the New Englander.

Article I of the proposed treaties set forth three classifications of arbitratative differences: first, "'questions hereafter arising,'" second, "'differences' relating to 'international matters,'" and third, "differences which are 'justiciable in their nature by reason of being susceptible of decision by the application of the principles of law or equity.'" ³⁷ To this article Williams addressed most of his remarks. He reviewed some of the major American problems and questions in the light of the threefold classifications. In reviewing this American policy he pointed out what he believed to come under the jurisdiction of the proposed treaties. The Monroe Doctrine, for example, would not be included. Immigration, a sore spot with Japan, would not be involved. By no means were the prerogatives of the Senate to be impaired by the acceptance of any such treaties. Williams had not been a member long enough to regard the Senate as especially sacred, however. To him, some of the Senators who continually harped on prerogatives were perhaps unconsciously making the Senate still more hated and distrusted by thrusting it as a bulwark athwart "a great and greatly desirable progressive movement."³⁸

Williams hoped to live to see the day when there would be an international court of arbitration, world-wide in its control, to which all nations would appeal their differences

³⁶ Dickson, *Old-Fashioned Senator*, 138.

³⁷ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 2 Sess., 2825.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2831.

for judicial settlement. The nations lacked the will for peace. If they sought as "industriously for fine-spun reasons to be at peace with one another as they do for fine-spun pretexts of difference, and if they stood on as fine points of so-called honor concerning their duties toward one another as they do concerning their rights, the world would be better off." ³⁹

A certain element in the population of the United States opposed privately and publicly arbitration treaties with England and with France on the ground that they were in direct opposition to Germany. Williams took due notice of this adverse criticism and said that the United States government would attempt—as a matter of fact, it was then attempting—to formulate a similar treaty with the Emperor of Germany.⁴⁰ Such agreements would not bring about permanent universal peace. They would, however, aid in the reduction of wars to a minimum. Root, who had prompted the enactment of treaties along the same lines when serving as Secretary of State, participated in the debate. His early work in Roosevelt's Cabinet was proof that he favored the arbitration of international difficulties. Bailey, who was becoming embittered with the majority of his party in these last days of his long and illustrious public career, stated very emphatically that he would not vote for any treaty of arbitration without reserving the right to decide what questions should be arbitrated. He was a little inclined to think that "blood letting" sometimes was good for any nation.⁴¹ The treaties which the President had signed in 1911 were ratified, with amendments, by the Senate in March, 1912. In Taft's opinion the amendments took all the "arbitration" out of these treaties. He sullenly refused to sign them.

By this time several important changes in America con-

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2833.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 2881. For a good summary of President Taft's part in the discussion of these arbitration treaties, see Pringle, *William Howard Taft*, II, 736-55.

tributed to a new attitude toward the problems of immigration. By the close of the first decade of the present century many were seeking to restrict Europeans emigrating to the United States. In 1911 a Congressional Immigration Committee, after holding hearings for four years and spending nearly a million dollars, published its report and conclusions in over forty volumes. Bills seeking to effect the recommendations were introduced in many sessions of Congress. Of such nature was a bill providing for educational restrictions, which came before the Senate in April, 1912.⁴² Some Senators opposed any educational test upon immigrants as laborers were needed to develop industry and agriculture. The Democratic belief, as explained by Williams, was that an educational test was not only desirable but necessary if our democratic form of government was to remain strong. James A. O'Gorman of New York desired a qualification of character. Senator William J. Stone believed that such a qualification existed in the pending bill. Williams punctured that contention by stating that it was absolutely impossible to write a character qualification into an immigration bill. It would be possible to secure a reputation test, providing all the neighborhood in which the immigrant had lived could be forced to testify. Williams and his colleagues were living attestations to the fact that reputation was not always character. The only way a character test could be approximated was through an educational, a social, and a medical test. Only God could look into the heart of a man and depict his character.⁴³

Many of the immigrants who entered the United States after 1900 chose to retain the name of the country from which they came and alluded to themselves as Irish-Americans or German-Americans. The "hyphenated Americans" Williams would not recognize. They often settled in highly industrialized centers, where they were not exposed to American institutions as earlier immigrants had been. Many

⁴² *Ibid.*, 4973 ff.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4975.

did not even take advantage of the proffered opportunities for Americanization, but chose to retain their native language and political theories. All of these conditions Williams reviewed in a two-day speech⁴⁴ that brought before his colleagues the dangers of continuing a system of unrestricted immigration. Although the bill passed the Senate, it failed in the House. In the following session, after the election, a similar measure was accepted by Congress, but failed to become a law because of Taft's veto.

Throughout his public career Williams was somewhat of a watchdog of the Treasury. He was not a miser with the public money, but he did, in most instances where the opportunity presented itself, economize in the handling of the public revenue. "There is no sense in having expenditures increase 400 per cent while population increases only 84 per cent."⁴⁵ In writing to a friend he made a clear analysis. The trouble was that every Representative came to Washington with the idea that he owed "it to his District to get money out of the Treasury" and every Senator came with the idea that he owed "the same duty to his state." Nobody was in Congress "to represent the Treasury."⁴⁶

Heyburn, chairman of the Committee on Manufactures, very bitterly criticized the decision of the committee that controlled the Senate contingency fund for not granting him, upon his application, an additional secretary. He stated that no chairman would ask for additional help if he did not need it. Williams, a member of the committee, replied: "What a man needs is one thing and what a man thinks he needs or fancies he needs is another thing."⁴⁷ The Mississippian preferred to do much of his work himself. He sometimes wished Senators would stop calling for a quorum every time one of them arose to make a speech. This made the other members leave their offices to come to the floor

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4973-5031.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 4579.

⁴⁶ Williams to T. P. Backleman, May 6, 1914, in Williams Papers.

⁴⁷ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 2 Sess., 7543-44.

to listen to long, boring talks for hours at a time. Much more good could be accomplished "than sitting here listening to one another."

Government rental of various buildings in Washington drew the attention of the new Senator from Mississippi. He gloried in the erection of the new Senate Office Building. Beautiful buildings educated the taste of the people, and this type of education was just as important as that of the intellect. He could not see the necessity, however, of the erection of that building, which covered an entire square, and of continuing to rent offices for the storing of Senators' documents and books. The explanation was that these articles were unhealthful. "If books had been unhealthful and insanitary this country would have ceased to enjoy the benefit of my constructive statesmanship many and many a year ago," retorted Williams.⁴⁸ He scoffed at the fact that about half of one floor of the Senate Office Building was filled with utterly useless bath arrangements. "It is as foolish," continued Williams, "as a man's going down into a pasture with a red flag and flaunting it at a bull. . . . You can go through the pasture just as well without the red flag. . . . It does not keep the rain off you; it does not keep the sun off you; it does not do any good; and it makes a bad impression on the bull."⁴⁹

For two days the United States Senate debated the insignificant question of the expediency of sending a set of books from the Senate Office Building to the Library of Congress. Williams believed that they should be transferred because the Library was more accessible to members of the House of Representatives, to members of the Treasury Department, and to the general public; and the custodian's \$2,500 salary would also be saved. The amendment offered by Williams to remove these volumes to the Library of Congress carried with it an appropriation of \$500 for conveyance.⁵⁰ After much wrangling the Senate decided that

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 7549.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 7552 ff.

the books should be transferred and that the custodian was to return to his former employment in the Library of Congress at a reduced salary.⁵¹

Williams criticized the method of selecting the police forces of the government buildings. These "political hangers-on," sixty-seven in number, who were supposed to have control of the national Capitol, had allowed someone to enter the building and ruthlessly cut to pieces one of the beautiful pictures which decorated the walls.⁵² He felt that the members of the police force should secure their positions and retain them upon merit, rather than upon political favor.⁵³

In an appropriation bill there occurred a provision for various bureaus and agencies of the government to purchase "other current publications." Several years before, when a member of the House, Williams had visited the Department of Agriculture Library and had found a number of magazines, secured under the appropriation for current publications, which did not pertain to the nature of the department. They had been bought with public money and placed there to be read by the employees and carried home to their families. Later they were returned to the department files. Williams did not like the idea of creating a separate library in each of the departments and bureaus. He moved to strike out of the appropriations bill all expenditures for "other current publications," in all of the various departments and bureaus.⁵⁴

When the suggestion was made to give heads of departments, bureaus, and divisions of the Federal government

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 7604.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 7610.

⁵³ Williams, as Chairman of the Senate Contingent Fund Committee several years later, disallowed temporarily an expenditure which the Senate police had made for seven dozen pairs of white gloves to wear to a state funeral. They had bought a pair each several months earlier for such an occasion, and Williams thought each officer should have saved them for future use. The bill for the gloves was \$24.50. See Williams to R. B. Nixon, August 5, 1915, in Williams Papers.

⁵⁴ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 2 Sess., 7865.

either coaches and horses or automobiles for use in their official duties, Williams argued that these modes of transportation would not be used for official duties only but would be used on Sundays, holidays, and during vacations for private use.⁵⁵ He used a street car to and from his office and paid his own fare. Others could do the same, or walk.

Those who were acquainted with the conditions knew that many of the governmental departments at Washington were hindered in their routine work by the retention of a number of superannuated employees. Senator Cummins showed by his remarks on the floor of the Senate that he was very familiar with the problem.⁵⁶ He brought out the difficulties of the system: first, the law should be stated more clearly in regard to what employees should enter upon competitive examinations; second, there was need of a reclassification of the Civil Service employees; third, employment should be for definite periods and based on merit alone; fourth, a provision for the retirement of Civil Service employees should be drawn up; fifth, a difficulty which perhaps could not be removed was that young men in their early twenties entered the service for only a few years' experience in government activities; while employed they received money for their services which they used in attending some of the excellent schools and colleges in Washington. Williams offered an amendment to the bill then under consideration to fix a tenure of office for all Civil Service employees.⁵⁷ An examination was to be made at the end of every five years. When any employee failed he was to be automatically dropped from employment. Those passing the examination were to be re-employed for another similar period if recommended by the head of the bureau. Williams opposed the enactment of the Civil Service pension plan for several reasons: (1) federal employees were paid higher than those in private industries; (2) it was morally and

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 3609.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 8126-27.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 8057 ff., 8131. The amendment failed without a roll call.

ethically wrong to pension them when teachers, preachers, doctors, and many others rendering service just as noble or more so were not being pensioned by the government; (3) such a program would entail huge expenditures of money. In these contentions Williams was swimming against the tide of reform. By allowing the heads of the departments to reappoint, he endeavored to create what he termed "efficiency retirement." He failed to recognize that politics, perhaps necessarily, would enter into the decisions. The Mississippian was in advance of his generation when he urged an old-age pension for all people in need of it. He would vote for such a pension in Mississippi, in the District, or as a national measure.⁵⁸

It is not known just when Williams made the acquaintance of Woodrow Wilson. Perhaps it was early in the young manhood of each. Although Williams preceded Wilson by several years, they were both students at the University of Virginia and members of the Jefferson Literary Society. Williams was elected as "Old Jeff's" best debater, and Wilson served the society as its president. Williams had read a number of Professor Wilson's contributions to history and political science. He recognized in the professor, who had turned to politics, the possessor of an unusual intellect. Williams had followed Wilson's meteoric rise to political fame with favorable interest. As early as 1910 Williams had encouraged Wilson in his successful fight to prevent the election of Senator James Smith, Jr., to the Senate by the New Jersey legislature. At that time Williams wrote: "I see Smith thinks you are not 'polite.' Polite! Heavens! When the question is about balking the publicly expressed will of a party and furthermore of preventing the return to the Senate of one of the four men who in '93 & '94 as members of that august body converted tariff revision & reformation into a *fiasco* that made the very gods on Olympus hold their sides with piteous laughter—so piteous that it became in

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 8045-47; 10,266-70.

the end strangely like tears. You did exactly right.”⁵⁹ Williams later wrote President Wilson that he had concluded when the latter was elected governor of the trust-ridden state of New Jersey by a handsome majority of over 49,000 that he was slated for election to the Presidency.⁶⁰

By January, 1912, Williams was ardently supporting Wilson for the presidential nomination.⁶¹ On April 1 Governor Wilson wrote the Senator asking an opportunity to confer with him personally with regard to national political conditions. “I feel that I very much need your counsel with regard to the whole situation,” said Wilson.⁶² The conference was arranged for April 4 in Washington with several other Senators in attendance. Through the spring of 1912 Williams penned letters to many friends in Mississippi and elsewhere, advocating the cause of the New Jersey Executive.⁶³ An election in May, however, resulted in the instruction of the Mississippi delegates for Oscar W. Underwood.⁶⁴ Vardaman, the Senator-elect from Mississippi, was an ardent advocate of the Underwood candidacy.

Congress continued in session during the national political conventions. The Congressmen had entered into a gentleman’s agreement that no important proposals would be taken up between certain definite dates.⁶⁵

The National Republican Convention met in Chicago. The Progressives and their hero, Theodore Roosevelt, were unable to unseat enough of the Taft-controlled delegates to win the nomination. A leading Republican who was present at the convention has written that if Roosevelt’s lieutenants had prolonged the convention, the Colonel would have re-

⁵⁹ Quoted in Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson; Life and Letters* (Garden City, N.Y., 1927-1939), III, 121-22.

⁶⁰ Williams to Woodrow Wilson, June 28, 1917, in Williams Papers.

⁶¹ Jackson *Daily News*, January 29, 1912.

⁶² Woodrow Wilson to Williams, April 1, 1912, in Williams Papers, Cedar Grove Plantation.

⁶³ Jackson *Daily News*, April 22, 1912.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, May 8, 1912.

⁶⁵ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 2 Sess., 8637.

ceived the nomination.⁶⁶ The Negro delegations of the lower South apparently held the balance of power. Although they were indebted to Taft through patronage, five of the Mississippi blacks flopped over into the Roosevelt column.⁶⁷ The Progressives walked out of the convention and met later in the same hall to nominate Colonel Roosevelt for a third term. Seated as observers at the Republican convention were two men who were destined to play major roles in the nomination of Woodrow Wilson at Baltimore two weeks later: William Jennings Bryan was in the press box as a reporter for several newspapers; William G. McAdoo, who was acknowledged as one of the very earliest enthusiasts for Wilson, was in the audience.

Williams went to Baltimore on June 23 in order to arrive early for the Democratic convention. His brother, Kit, the retiring national committeeman from Mississippi, came from Yazoo City and accompanied the Senator. Williams carried with him a draft of a provision for an antitrust plank which he was determined to have inserted in the platform of the Democratic party: "Monopolies are contrary to the good of free institutions. They are not to be tolerated upon any pretext, excuse, or condition whatsoever. The existing corporate trusts of the country must be disintegrated in fact as well as in form."⁶⁸ Williams had carried on some correspondence with Wilson on the trust question during the days just before the convention. They had agreed that "our stand on this matter is of capital importance."⁶⁹

Although Williams carried out the instructions of his state to vote for Underwood as long as the Alabamian's name was before the convention, this did not prevent him

⁶⁶ Watson, *As I Knew Them*, 157-58.

⁶⁷ Jackson *Daily News*, June 17, 1912.

⁶⁸ New York *Times*, June 24, 1912.

⁶⁹ Williams to Woodrow Wilson, June 5, 1912; Wilson to Williams, June 11, 1912; *id.* to *id.*, June 17, 1912, in Williams Papers, Cedar Grove Plantation.

from exerting all his influence for Wilson. In a speech before the convention on June 26, Williams bitterly criticized the Covington Report from the Committee on Rules and Order of Business. He urged the adoption of the minority report. This latter report, later adopted by the convention, prohibited the national convention from accepting instructions from state conventions governing the votes of delegates who had been nominated and elected in Congressional districts by mandatory statutes.⁷⁰ The boss-controlled state conventions were not to be allowed to apply the unit rule and thus defeat the will of the people as expressed in district primaries or conventions. Williams was not an effective speaker in the large convention hall. Although his voice did not carry to the galleries, he secured a respectful hearing from most of the delegates.

In the melee of the convention Williams lost his badge of admittance into the convention hall. The policeman on duty was not so well-acquainted with the Senator as his friends in Washington or his home folks in Mississippi, nor did he know that the Senator was very absent-minded, that he sometimes forgot to put on his vest or his tie and to adjust one or both after he had adorned himself with them; the officer refused the Mississippian admittance into the hall.

" 'Step lively,' " said the officer when the Senator stated that he had lost his badge and his ticket. But he was one of the delegates at large from Mississippi and a United States Senator. These qualifications should gain admittance to any national political convention.

" 'Will you not let me go in, please?' inquired the delegate."

" 'No, I won't, and you might as well move on. Step lively now.' "

The Mississippian went to the other side of the street. He stood and stared at the entrance of the convention hall

⁷⁰ *Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention, 1912* (Baltimore, 1912), 59-60.

until Woodrow Wilson's campaign manager came along, identified him, and secured his admission.⁷¹

For many ballots Champ Clark, Speaker of the House, received a majority of the votes of the convention. He could not, however, secure the then required two-thirds majority for nomination. When it was seen that there was no chance for either Underwood or Harman or other favorite sons, efforts were made to throw the votes of these less popular candidates to both Wilson and Clark. Wilson's managers, especially William F. McCombs, were willing to admit defeat. Wilson, at the urgent request of McCombs, had even dictated a statement for the latter to give to his supporters releasing them. Just as the statement was received by McCombs in a hotel room, McAdoo entered the room.

"'The jig's up,' " said McCombs.⁷²

McAdoo went into action. He rebuked McCombs in words too abusive to print. He had Wilson withdraw the message and urged renewed energy and determination. When the New York delegation under the control of Charles F. Murphy, the Tammany Hall "Boss," announced its ninety votes for Champ Clark, William Jennings Bryan realized that the moment to throw his strength to Wilson had arrived. In a speech, the effect of which has been greatly debated, Bryan stated that as long as Tammany Hall voted for the Speaker of the House, he could never cast his influence for his neighbor from Missouri.⁷³ Clark's mad rush from the Capitol City in a desperate effort to stop the rising tide of Wilson enthusiasm was without avail. The tireless efforts of the Williams brothers⁷⁴ were successful in throw-

⁷¹ Jackson *Daily News*, June 26, 1912; Jackson *Daily Clarion-Ledger*, June 27, 1912.

⁷² Baker, *Woodrow Wilson*, III, 351-52.

⁷³ Bryan, like Williams, was an instructed delegate, and as such had been voting for Clark. Frederic L. Paxson, *Pre-War Years, 1913-1917* (Boston, 1936), 1, credits Bryan with accomplishing Wilson's nomination "by indirection."

⁷⁴ Kit Williams attended nearly all of the caucuses of the Wilson faction during the convention. Jackson *Daily News*, July 3, 1912.

ing a goodly number of Mississippi votes to Wilson once the unit rule was broken. Wilson was finally nominated on the forty-sixth ballot.

Williams was chosen a member of Wilson's Executive Campaign Committee in the East. Late in the campaign the Mississippian made a few speeches in the eastern section of the country.⁷⁵ What would be the fate of Williams if Wilson were elected? Would the leadership of the Senate be forced on him? ⁷⁶ Perhaps there would be a place in the Cabinet! Many urged it.

A great number of people seemed to sense, as did Williams, that the campaign would be between the two progressive candidates. On several occasions between the National Democratic Convention and the adjournment of Congress some two months later, the Mississippian made what may be termed campaign speeches on the floor of the Senate. The Bull Moose candidate's policies on the trust and tariff issues were analyzed and criticized. The former President had advocated a commission or bureau to determine the goodness or badness of trusts: "Good trusts must be treated kindly and bad trusts must be treated severely." ⁷⁷ Good trusts, Williams concluded, were those whose officials appeared before the bureau and testified as to their goodness in order that no doubt whatsoever might arise as to their accepted merit. Many trusts made liberal donations to the campaign chest of the Colonel.⁷⁸ The Mississippian would abolish all commissions or bureaus that had any power to determine the merits of trusts. By enacting laws which would abolish all of them he would secure a government of laws and not of men. The Progressive candidate, through his speeches and the platform upon which he stood,

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, September 20, 1912. Williams' participation in this campaign was limited by his acceptance of an invitation to deliver eight lectures on Thomas Jefferson at Columbia University. These lectures were published as *Thomas Jefferson, His Permanent Influence on American Institutions*.

⁷⁶ "Savoyard," "A Real Leader Awaits John Sharp Williams," in *Jackson Daily News*, March 23, 1912.

⁷⁷ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 2 Sess., 5326.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 11,786-87.

accepted many of the more recent reform proposals. Among these were the initiative, referendum, recall, and woman suffrage. Why had not "Teddy" as President advocated these measures? He had made his exit from the White House only three and a half years before. The chief trouble with the former President was that he had been "so much dissatisfied during the last three years and a half because he ascertained that he could not be both ex-President and President at the same time."⁷⁹

Williams' sarcasm was brought into play numerous times in these political utterances. On one occasion, when he gave the "Creed of the Church of Latter Day Saints according to the Gospel of Saint Theodore," he became almost irreverent. Many people wrote Williams letters criticizing him for speaking sacrilegiously.⁸⁰ At least two members of the clergy denounced his parody on the Apostle's Creed as sinful. They urged the Senator to get down on his knees and pray for a sound conversion to the faith of his fathers.⁸¹ Williams replied to his critics that he was not "mocking God but Roosevelt." Although the Creed was stricken from the *Congressional Record* at the request of its author, a copy of it was found in the attic at Cedar Grove in a pouch of old letters.

ROOSEVELT'S CREED

"I believe in Theodore Roosevelt, maker of noise and strife, and in Ambition, his only Creed (My Lord). He was born of the love of power and suffered under William Taft; was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Africa. The third year he rose again from the jungle and ascended into favor and sitteth on the right hand of his party, whence he shall come to scourge the licked and the dead.

"I believe in the Holy Outlook, the Big Stick, the Annanias

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 7212.

⁸⁰ Letters in Williams Papers, Cedar Grove Plantation.

⁸¹ The Reverend C. Earnest Smith, Rector of St. Thomas Church, Washington, D.C., and Reverend Henry I. Nicholas, of the First Presbyterian Church, Summit Hill, Pennsylvania. See *Washington Post*, April 29, 1912.

Club, the forgiveness of political activities, the resurrection of Presidential Ambitions and the Third Term Everlasting. Amen. Amen. Amen." ⁸²

No one anywhere attached more importance than did Williams to the solemn "words of a Solemn Creed." Yet a creed was not the word of God but the "recognized endeavor of honest men trying to learn the philosophy of love to one's neighbor and love to one's God." ⁸³ Williams also reawakened his poetical talent.

I'm twice as great as Washington,
I'm twice as great as Grant;
Because third terms they didn't get
They needn't think I can't.

I'm twice as great as Jefferson
And Madison combined;
I'm twice as great of all the lot
Of Presidents, I find!

I'm greater than my country,
And its customs and its laws,
Its poor old Constitution,
And its precedential flaws!

I'm twice as great as any man
Above or 'neath the sod;
In fact, I'm half inclined to think
I'm most as great as Nod! ⁸⁴

The Roosevelt Convention, according to Williams, had sung with "great gusto" to the tune of "Follow, Follow, I Will Follow Jesus" the words:

Follow, follow,
We will follow Teddy.
Anywhere he leads us
We will follow on.

⁸² This must have been read in the Senate on April 25, 1912. See *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 2 Sess., 5328.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 11,535.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

They were accused of being sacrilegious in their blind hero worship.⁸⁵ Williams was deliberate in his stinging sarcasm because he believed it "the only medicine for . . . [Roosevelt's] disease." He later congratulated Wilson, however, on his restraint in the matter because in his "dignified character as a Presidential Candidate" he could not afford to administer such "medicine."⁸⁶

In speaking for a resolution which he had introduced proposing an amendment to the Federal Constitution, Williams continued his exposé of the former President. This resolution which would prohibit any President from serving a third term,⁸⁷ Williams strongly advocated. Democratic institutions are always what practice makes them, he stated. Without some statutory restriction there would be an ever-present danger "as long as there are adventurous and ambitious and able men, conjoining to their courage and ambition and ability great popularity."⁸⁸ Williams did not want to restrict by the new amendment any of the former Presidents then living. When asked why he did not want such a restriction, he replied, "I do not want President Roosevelt to go to his grave believing that had it not been for such a law he could have been elected by the people for a third term."⁸⁹ The proposal passed the Senate in the third session of that Congress, February 1, 1913, by a vote of 47 to 23,⁹⁰ but was pigeonholed for the rest of the session in the House.⁹¹

The Democratic members of the House sent to the Senate during the summer of 1912 a number of bills providing for the decrease of tariff rates. Williams clamored for their enactment by the Senate. The Democratic members of the

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Williams to Woodrow Wilson, August 21, 1912, in Williams Papers, Cedar Grove Plantation.

⁸⁷ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 3 Sess., 2264.

⁸⁸ Williams, *Thomas Jefferson*, 168.

⁸⁹ Quoted in *Jackson Daily News*, February 14, 1913.

⁹⁰ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 3 Sess., 2419-20.

⁹¹ See *ibid.*, Index, S. R. 78.

Senate held a caucus and agreed not to adjourn until every tariff bill which the Democrats of the House passed had been voted on in the Senate. In an endurance contest between the two houses, it was recognized long ago that the Senators by long tenures of office, most of them living in their own homes in Washington, would be much better prepared to meet *ad infinitum* in Congressional session.⁹² The members of the House came up for election every other year. Most of them only rented apartments in Washington and would in the long run give in more quickly than the Senators. Especially would this be true during an election year.

Although several important measures were debated, it was evident that Congress was talking only for the edification of the country. The element in control had determined that no new legislation should be enacted before the presidential election in November. The Democrats in the House passed reform after reform in the fields of labor, trusts, and the tariff. But only the general appropriation bills were enacted. The standpat Republicans, the insurgents of the same party, and the Democrats were apparently willing to go to the country with their various platforms adopted by their national conventions and elucidated in the speeches of the leaders of these groups in the national Congress.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 62 Cong., 2 Sess., 7148, 11,815.

Chapter X

AMONG THE WILSON REFORMERS

WOODROW WILSON, the second Democratic President since the Civil War, was elected in November, 1912, largely as the result of the split in the Republican party. Williams had predicted almost a month before the holding of the national convention in 1912 that, like the Kilkenny cats, when members of the opposition finished with each other, there would be no Republican party left.¹ Shortly after the election President Taft and Champ Clark were chatting in the White House. Both had been defeated by Wilson—Clark for nomination, Taft in the election. Clark said to the President, "Well, we are handsomer than he is any way." ² Roosevelt, recovering from a pistol wound inflicted at Milwaukee on October 14, was trying to console himself over the loss of a third term, while he planned for the future.

Wilson had a majority of the votes in the Electoral College even without counting a single vote from the eleven states that had constituted the Confederacy. Cleveland, in his second election, had received more electoral votes in the South than in the North; yet his Administration in relation to both currency and the tariff problems was decidedly northern. Wilson's attitude gave indications of being definitely southern. In the various fields of political leadership, the North had certainly called the South back into power. Of the ten members of the President's Cabinet, five were natives of the South. The President himself was a

¹ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 2 Sess., 7212.

² Francis McHale, *President and Chief Justice; The Life and Public Service of William Howard Taft* (Philadelphia, 1931), 176.

native Virginian. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was from Louisiana; in the diplomatic service three Southerners held ranking positions. A majority of the most important positions of the Senate and House, including the chairmanships of most committees, were held by Southerners.³ Mississippi occupied a unique position in the membership of the Senate, having in that body five of her native sons, George E. Chamberlain, James P. Clarke, Thomas P. Gore, Francis G. Newlands, Key Pittman, and two adopted sons, James K. Vardaman and John Sharp Williams.⁴

Many of Williams' friends favored his receiving a position in the President's Cabinet. The opposing faction of Mississippi politicians hoped that he would be promoted in order to create a vacancy in the Senate. Williams, though not tendered a cabinet post, stated publicly that he desired none and would remain in the Senate.⁵ His leadership in the new Administration, however, was recognized from the very outset. He was characterized as one of the "Moderate Liberals with whom Wilson is likely to confer a great deal."⁶ Wilson had acknowledged the Mississippian's important position when he wrote on November 9, 1912: "I am the more gratified by your kind message of congratulation because I know how large a part you played in the result [of the election]."⁷

A friendly editor stated that Williams was at the "zenith of his career in public life." When the President called the special session, this editor predicted that Williams would soon be acclaimed the Senate's most accomplished leader.⁸ The personnel of that body seemed to compare favorably

³ Judson C. Welliver, "The Triumph of the South," in *Munsey's Magazine* (New York), XLIX (1913), 731-43.

⁴ See *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1927*.

⁵ *Jackson Daily News*, November 25, 1912.

⁶ Judson C. Welliver, "Leaders of the New Congress," in *Munsey's Magazine*, XLVIII (1913), 715-28.

⁷ Wilson to Williams, November 9, 1912, in Williams Papers, Cedar Grove Plantation.

⁸ *Jackson Daily News*, February 14, 1913.

with that of a generation earlier. Young men were much more in evidence, however; some of them had "skipped a class" in the usual political promotion. Although a "little more noisy and more feverish," the high position which the Senate had always held was not made lower, certainly, by the presence of Root, Lodge, James A. O'Gorman, and Williams.⁹

As the people had given to the new President a majority in both the House and the Senate, he lost no time in calling a special session for April 2 to begin work on his program of economic reforms. On the tariff question, one of the chief issues of the campaign of the previous year, a majority of the Democrats were pledged to a downward revision. During the Lame Duck Session of the preceding Congress, the Ways and Means Committee of the House under the leadership of Oscar W. Underwood of Alabama had spent weeks in public hearings. The Finance Committee of the Senate, of which Williams was a member, had also held tariff hearings. On April 22, within less than two months after the new Administration began, the Ways and Means Committee of the House reported a tariff bill on the floor. The purpose of the bill, as stated in the report, was to establish duties designed primarily to produce revenue, and to attain this end in such way as not to injure or destroy any legitimate business.¹⁰ The bill had been worked out in Democratic caucus by members of both the House and the Senate. Perhaps no one member of either the Ways and Means Committee of the House or the Finance Committee of the Senate favored everything proposed in the bill; certainly Williams did not agree with the sugar schedule. The Mississippian, like most other members of Congress, was willing to forego his individual objectives in the interest of party harmony.

⁹ Adolph S. Ochs, "Senators Now and Then," in *New York Times*, June 14, 1914.

¹⁰ Oscar W. Underwood, *Drifting Sands of Party Politics* (New York, 1928), 176.

This Congress marked the beginning of Williams' career in the Senate under a Democratic President. Now that his party was entrenched in both wings of the Capitol, he changed his tactics as a parliamentarian. Earlier in his senatorial career, as in his years in the House, he had spoken long and often. In these speeches he had criticized, at times very severely, the program of the political enemy. Not all his attention had been given to critical argumentation, but a large part of his earlier speeches in the Senate and in the House dealt with the advancement of a Democratic program. His criticisms were now restricted or reserved for caucus meetings and for conferences with individual members of the majority.

The index of the *Congressional Record* shows that Williams spoke a total of 204 times during the period of the enactment of the tariff bill. Many times, however, he uttered only a few sentences. The motive was not debate nor oratory, but the explanation of some particular point that had arisen in the general discussion in the Senate. On these more than two hundred occasions, Williams spoke on some sixty-two different articles listed in the tariff bill—on such items as automobiles, bagging, bananas, binder twine, butter, buttons, coffee substitutes, cotton cloth, fish, fruit, grain bags, hay, meats, paper and pulp, peanut oil, pineapples, quinine, sugar, wheat, and wool.¹¹

The Republican members employed various dilatory tactics which may be grouped chronologically under three headings: (1) the attempt to secure more hearings before the Finance Committee of the Senate, (2) the effort to prolong the interval before enactment of the tariff bill by extended debate, and (3) the endeavor to change the bill materially by incorporating into it numerous amendments. Charles E. Townsend, Jacob H. Gallinger, and others received telegrams from their constituents requesting the privilege of appearing before the Finance Committee. The

¹¹ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 1 Sess., Index, 353.

chairman of the committee, Furnifold M. Simmons, and the second ranking member, William J. Stone, were absent. Williams, as the third ranking member on the Democratic side, answered the Republican members. Further hearings were absolutely unnecessary. The committees in both House and Senate had already held public hearings near the close of the preceding session of Congress. Penrose declared that he was certainly going to insist on further hearings before the Finance Committee.¹² Although "Penrose *et al*" were "as busy as bees" ¹³ the Democratic leaders organized their forces and prevented all attempts to return the bill to the committee. The business of the country was somewhat unsettled, indicating that action must be taken to prevent serious disruption of business. Warehouses at New York City and at other ports of entry were being filled with foreign goods awaiting the enactment of the bill.¹⁴ Williams' opinion was that action should come quickly. He spoke not only for himself; he had conversed with other Senators and ventured that he spoke the opinion of the majority.¹⁵

Congressional delegates from Louisiana, attempting to alter the sugar schedule, offered amendments in the House. When none of these were successful, the Louisiana Senators broke loose from the agreement in the Democratic caucus and very severely criticized the sugar schedule. Williams could not see why the members from his neighbor state would not agree to the lowering of the duties on this commodity. Joseph E. Ransdell of Louisiana explained his opposition to the proposed decrease on sugar duties by stating that in more than fifty campaign speeches he had pledged himself to the people of the state to oppose any such reduction.¹⁶

Senator Reed Smoot, a standpat Republican, spoke in

¹² *Ibid.*, 201.

¹³ Jackson *Daily News*, May 13, 1913.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, July 22, 1913. On July 1, 1912, the merchandise held in New York bonded warehouses was \$45,000,000. On July 1, 1913, the amount had increased to \$64,000,000. By September it was calculated at \$100,000,000.

¹⁵ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 1 Sess., 201.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1565.

his usual omniscient way, bitterly assailing the bill under discussion. Williams replied that the confidence of his friend reminded him of what Lord Mansfield once said about Macaulay: "If I were as cocksure of one thing in the world as Thomas Babington Macaulay is of everything, I would be the happiest man of my acquaintance." "The Senator," continued Williams, "must get over the idea that people who differ from him" do not know anything.¹⁷

When William E. Borah criticized some of the duties of the bill, Williams recalled a story that he had heard sometime earlier. A friend of his walking down a street in Louisville, Kentucky, noticed a man in front of him monopolizing the sidewalk. As his friend neared the man, he noticed that the stranger was gesticulating violently. Just as he came up to him, Williams' friend heard the stranger say: "I'm going home to lunch. If lunch ain't ready, I'm going to raise Cain; and if lunch is ready, I won't eat a dad-blamed bite of it." At this point Borah attempted to interrupt Williams. The latter, turning to the former amid the laughter of his colleagues, said: "If there is any point in the world where it is inappropriate to interrupt a man, it is when he is in the midst of an anecdote." Williams believed that the Senator from Idaho came to the Democratic tariff revision with his mind already made up that he was going to "raise Cain" every time the opportunity presented itself. If it were not to his order, he was not going to eat a bit of it. Williams then yielded to his western friend, and the latter insisted that the Southerner retell the story in the way that he had previously told it in the Senate cloakroom. In answer to this request Williams told of a friend of his down in Yazoo City, who was always using French words with Anglo-Saxon prefixes and suffixes. This friend had coined the word "inaproposiousness." There were occasions when there was a good deal of "inaproposiousness" to repeating a story as it had been originally heard.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2525.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2653.

Joseph L. Bristow criticized severely the duties on bananas proposed in the Underwood-Simmons bill. Under the Payne-Aldrich Act bananas had been admitted free. Williams stated that although Senator Gore was the originator of the duty on bananas, there were three reasons why he agreed to it: first, bananas were not an article of everyday food; second, the duty was so small that it could not possibly raise the retail price; third, the banana industry was controlled by the United Fruit Company, a trust.¹⁹ Great must be the need of the Senator from Kansas for the *voto Italiano* that he would take so much time of the Senate in criticizing the duty of one tenth of one cent per pound on bananas.

The lowering of the import duty on butter from six to two and one-half cents per pound aroused the opposition of Senator Carroll S. Page of Vermont. Williams replied that people from Vermont should be willing to take a little less for their butter as that commodity was selling for a high price. This did not seem to satisfy the New England Senator, who said that such a reduction would annihilate the dairy industry in his state. Williams replied that if each Senator were going to consider only his constituents who produced the various commodities rather than the whole people of the United States who were the consumers, the tariff duties could never be lowered.²⁰

The bill contained a duty of six cents a gallon on peanut oil. Lawrence Y. Sherman of Illinois chose this duty as his point of attack. Just think, he protested, of the way the miners and other poor people of Illinois would suffer at having to pay this unusually high import duty. Williams stated that of course all of these people ate peanut oil all the time; they never ate bread or meat, both of which were imported free or at greatly reduced rates under the pending bill. Sherman asked Williams if he favored the repeal of the ten-cent tax on colored oleomargarine. Williams not only replied in the affirmative but stated that if the tax were

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2742.

²⁰ Jackson *Daily News*, August 19, 1913.

going to be retained on oleomargarine, he would also tax colored butter. Sherman promptly asked one further question of the Southerner. "Did you ever have a cowman after you?" The answer was easily understandable.

"Oh yes; but not perhaps to the same extent that the gentlemen in the Senator's neighborhood had cowmen after them. I never had a cowman after me so strongly that I was intimidated and backed down and voted to prostitute the taxing power of the Government to discriminate between two healthful articles, in favor of one and against the other. There are a great many cowmen in Mississippi, but they never cowed me to quite that extent." ²¹

The debate continued for several months, the Republicans delaying the efforts of the Democratic majority to rush the bill through to enactment. Williams, of course, saw the object that they had in mind and several times made pointed remarks in regard to these attempts. On one of these occasions Williams, through a joke, brought out what he thought would be the best policy for the Republicans in regard to the tariff situation. Williams and Judge Brumfield were standing on a street in Yazoo City. Just across the street a little Negro was trying to ride a bucking mule. First the animal would throw up both his hind heels together, then throw up his fore heels, and then bring all four feet together and arch his back. The little Negro managed to stay on by clamping his heels into the mule's sides and putting his arms around the mule's neck. Judge Brumfield said: " 'John, I wish you would look at that mule, he don't know a thing about pleading. Evidently he never studied pleading.' " Williams replied that he could not see " 'any connection . . . between the mule's conduct and the science of legal pleading.' "

" 'Why,' he said, 'you're stupider than I thought. Don't you see the mule is demurring, when he ought to go to the country?' " ²² Why did not the Republicans quit de-

²¹ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 1 Sess., 2783.

²² *Ibid.*, 3065-66.

murring and go to the country? The quicker the better—the Democrats were ready.

Senators Moses E. Clapp of Minnesota and Boies Penrose of Pennsylvania criticized Williams very severely for the attitude that he had taken in regard to the sugar schedule. Williams had the choice of accepting the schedule as provided in the bill or accepting the duties as provided in the Payne-Aldrich bill. Again he had either to accept the consensus held by his party and remain a full-fledged party member or to accept his own opinion and be an outcast and of no further use to the party. No matter of principle was involved.²³ Williams knew no other way of accomplishing anything but by teamwork. Penrose who had also criticized the secrecy and partisanship in the formation of the tariff bill, reminded Williams of a sermon he had heard entitled "Satan Rebuking Sin." Individual members of the majority relinquished their opinions to accept the consensus of the majority and were working in party unison. There was no secrecy about the formation of the tariff among the Democrats. American people had placed upon them the responsibility, which they desired to carry out in a partisan manner. No one was coerced.

Senator Clapp questioned Williams as to what he thought of a tariff commission. Williams replied that he did not want a commission that would take away the responsibility that had been placed on Congress by the people. The members were elected; the commission would be appointed. When tariff rates were fixed by Congress the country knew what was being done. If the rates were fixed by a bureau or a commission, the country would know only the decision. Commissions might be a little more efficient, Williams admitted, but he chose less efficiency through self-government rather than efficiency through centralized bureaucracy.²⁴

The Underwood-Simmons tariff bill carried with it an income tax provision, which had been prepared largely by

²³ *Ibid.*, 3350.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3491.

Representative Cordell Hull of Tennessee. Williams was highly in favor of expanding the Federal taxing power. He made a few changes in the Hull provision after it came from the House.²⁵ He had ardently supported the income tax provision of the Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act of 1894; and in every Congress since that time, he had introduced a bill providing for such a levy. Because this was the first income tax since the enactment of the Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution, Congress desired to make it as simple as possible. Incomes from \$4,000 up were to be taxed.

Williams expressed his hope that the time would come when all American taxes would be derived from internal revenue and income. The chief *raison d'être* of the income tax was its elasticity. In time of war, incomes would expand greatly and the amount of money collected by the income tax would increase, whereas the revenue derived from the tariff would decrease. The aim of the income tax provision, Williams stated, was to secure only enough revenue to run the government. As Professor Frederic L. Paxson pointed out, "the application of this new principle of income taxation marks a turning-point in the fiscal and economic policy of the United States."²⁶

George W. Norris of Nebraska criticized the origin of the tariff act. He doubted if it had been formed outside of the White House.²⁷ It was true that the President, since his election, had been in close contact with the leaders of the Democratic party. In his initial message to the Congress he had broken a custom established by Thomas Jefferson by appearing to deliver it in person, against the advice of many of the leaders of his party, including Williams. The Mississippian "quoted Jefferson's reasons for discontinuing the practice, and referred to it as 'the speech from the throne.'"²⁸ The President had held meetings with a

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3766, 3806. For a summary of Hull's views on income taxation see Hinton, *Cordell Hull*, 129-44.

²⁶ Paxson, *Pre-War Years, 1913-1917*, p. 79.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3810.

²⁸ Baker, *Woodrow Wilson*, IV, 105.

number of the leaders of his party on several occasions during the progress of the bill through the two houses. These conferences did not always occur in the White House, for the President himself sometimes journeyed to the Capitol and met with the Democratic leaders there. Had not Thomas Jefferson done this very thing? And were not followers of the democratic Virginian again in power? It had been Woodrow Wilson's firm belief since his undergraduate days at Princeton that there should be a closer co-operative relationship between the executive and legislative departments of the national government. In reply to Norris' criticism, Williams stated that the President had taken no part in the formation of the tariff act, except in two items.²⁹

The attempt of Robert M. LaFollette to lower the tax on smaller incomes, as provided in the Wisconsin law, failed.³⁰ Williams stated that the majority was not acting without some common sense, some degree of information, and some small degree of knowledge as to the best methods to be employed. All Democrats were fallible, he admitted, and it was notorious that at least one of them did not take himself very seriously. In the future, as the income tax would likely be more used to meet the needs of the government for revenue, the question would arise as to whether or not the Democratic party would make war upon great fortunes. "When the Democratic Party begins to do it, it will cease to be the Democratic Party and become the socialistic party of the United States." Any war that an honest party or an honest man makes upon accumulated wealth must not be upon the wealth but upon the method of accumulation. Williams did not believe that great fortunes could be accumulated honestly in a lifetime provided equal privileges were extended to all people and no man received any government support. The reason some men accumulated

²⁹ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 1 Sess., 3810. In Wilson's first book, *Congressional Government* (New York, 1885), he had given proof of his faith in active presidential leadership in our government.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3820-21.

wealth, however, and others did not was that some loved money and others did not. The man loving learning would grow learned. The man loving beauty would grow beautiful. The man loving wealth would grow rich.³¹

After four months of discussion, May 9 to September 9, the bill passed the Senate by a vote of 44 to 37.³² The Democratic majority of three in the Senate was put to a severe test. The Treasury Department under the leadership of William G. McAdoo aided materially in the passage of the measure.³³ It required nearly three weeks for the conferees of the Senate and House to iron out the differences between the bill as it had passed the House and the Senate. Williams was a member of the conference committee which was faced with 676 amendments. The report showed that the Senate conferees had triumphed in about two thirds of the amendments.³⁴ The Underwood-Simmons Tariff Act was finally passed on October 3, and presented to the President on October 7.³⁵ It lowered the duties on practically all articles and increased the free list to include six hundred items. This free list favored farmers and laborers as it consisted chiefly of the necessities of life. This law was perhaps more like the Walker Tariff of 1846 than any other tariff previously enacted. Williams had made no set speech, no long-drawn-out argument. Many of the other Senators had spoken for several hours at a time, but the Mississippian had contented himself with "correcting the bill in caucus, committee and conference and in challenging the fallacies of Republican arguments on the floor of the Senate when it seemed that they were about to drive home a point."³⁶ He characterized the bill as the best tariff act since 1846.³⁷

Mr. Dooley observed that "th' on'y people that are bothered about th' income tax ar-re th' few that have incomes

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 4617.

³³ William G. McAdoo, *Crowded Years* (New York, 1931), 195.

³⁴ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 1 Sess., 5300-5301.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5497, 5637.

³⁶ *Jackson Daily News*, October 10, 1913.

³⁷ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 1 Sess., 5629.

so large that they're not bothered about annything." He had received an income tax blank among his "other mail on th' foorteenth ef Feb'ry—like all comic volentines, 'twas a little vulger an' personal an' touched on wan iv me principal deformities." ³⁸

Williams chose to celebrate the enactment of the bill in an unusual way. He is reported as having gone to the Senate Office Building and visited the fine Turkish bath establishment. He passed through the frosted glass doors leading into the inner temple where great men prostrated themselves and were scrubbed. The Mississippian was stripped of his raiment and put through one weird ablution and ordeal after another. The attendants "electric-lighted him, steamed him, parboiled him, prodding him from time to time to see if he were done, manipulated him, scoured him, and played doleful pieces on him with their bare hands as if he were an xylophone." Finally the Senator was taken out and laid down on a marble slab for the finishing process. The attendants had begun to give him what is known as the salt rubdown, when the Senator entirely lost his temper. He pulled himself up on his haunches in an angular sitting position and spoke as follows: "It may be that I haven't taken as many baths in the course of my life as I should. But I'll be eternally goldarned if anybody can make me believe that I'm so hopelessly dirty that I've got to lie here and be scoured with sand." ³⁹

Wilson appeared before Congress on June 23 "to fire the first gun in the new [currency] battle." ⁴⁰ In beginning this new reform before the enactment of the tariff bill, the President had gone against the advice of a number of his Democratic friends in Congress and in his Cabinet. The Baltimore platform had not specified any definite time for cur-

³⁸ *New York Times*, March 8, 1914.

³⁹ *Jackson Daily News*, October 10, 1913.

⁴⁰ Baker, *Woodrow Wilson*, IV, 132.

rency reform, nor had Wilson in his presidential campaign speeches made any definite promises on this point. Would it not be better to wait until the tariff measure was safely on the statute books? Would it not be wise for the chief to advance with his political array of reforms from one issue to another rather than to begin a general advance on a number of fronts simultaneously? Could the new captain of the economic reformers rout all the various enemies of his reforms at the same time? Williams urged the President to delay, and after the currency bill had been introduced the Mississippian saw danger in forcing its discussion and passage at the same time that the tariff bill was under consideration. The President appreciated the suggestions and advice of Williams, but felt that the Senator evidently did not realize the pressure that was being exerted by the banking trust of the country. Everyone who had any knowledge of banking conditions knew that things were going on in the banking world which were evidently based upon the desire to make the members of the two houses uneasy in the presence of the banker's power. "It is possible," wrote Wilson, that with expanding business and contracting credits a panic may be brought on while we wait."⁴¹ Those acquainted with the financial situation knew the great need for currency reform. The Pujo Monetary Committee, after several years of investigation, had made a voluminous report in which it was charged that the money trust was really in control of the currency of the country. There had been no vital changes in the monetary laws since the enactment of the National Banking Law in 1863. Currency was "suffering from hardening of the arteries and general senility."⁴²

During the entire period of enactment, Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo acted in close unison with the members of the House and Senate. Congressman Glass, whom Wil-

⁴¹ Wilson to Williams, October 11, 1913, in Williams Papers. This letter is quoted in part in Charles C. Tansill, *America Goes to War* (Boston, 1938), 68, n. 5.

⁴² McAdoo, *Crowded Years*, 213.

liams had years earlier placed on the Banking and Currency Committee in the House, had before Wilson's election done considerable work on currency reform. He had drawn up plans for a money bill and had made several trips to Princeton, where he had held intimate talks with Wilson before the latter's inauguration.⁴³ The people most opposed to any reform in the banking problems were a large majority of the bankers themselves. Their energy was as tireless as that of men "fighting a forest fire." They criticized the measure as "populistic, socialistic, half-baked, destructive, infantile, badly conceived, and unworkable."⁴⁴

Glass was driven to desperation more than once before the bill was reported. He was ready to resign his chairmanship; went to Wilson and said so. "Damn it, don't resign, old fellow; out-vote them!"⁴⁵ It was the only time that Glass ever heard the President swear. After the bill was reported Williams used his influence to promote its passage as rapidly as expediency permitted.⁴⁶

Williams stated on the floor of the Senate that he hoped the Banking and Currency Committee would settle as many of the points of controversy as possible before the bill reached the floor of the Senate. On October 7, 1913, he wrote the President a sixteen-page letter about the measure. He assured Wilson that it was, "taking it 'plum through,' as the darkies say, the best banking and currency bill ever presented to Congress." However, there were many minor flaws which the Senator hoped to correct, and one was so serious that he would be forced to vote in opposition to the bill if it were not remedied. The bill as it then stood required country banks to collect and remit checks and bills of exchange drawn upon banks elsewhere free of charge. "I do not see," wrote Williams, "how I could reconcile this

⁴³ Baker, *Woodrow Wilson*, IV, 139 ff.; McAdoo, *Crowded Years*, 219-20.

⁴⁴ McAdoo, *Crowded Years*, 219-20.

⁴⁵ Carter Glass, *An Adventure in Constructive Finance* (Garden City, N.Y., 1927), 132.

⁴⁶ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 1 Sess., 5627.

to the just interests of the country banks of Mississippi and vote for the bill with that provision unamended.”⁴⁷ A few days later Wilson wrote an appreciative message to the Senator: “I hear from many quarters how helpful your interest in the currency bill is proving, and I want to thank you again for the interest you are taking in it and the impulse you are giving to the effort for early action.”⁴⁸ Although Williams’ recommendations were not accepted *verbatim*, they aided in shaping some of the finer provisions of the bill.

Many of the Senators, including Williams, were receiving letters from bankers over the country, who evidently had the idea that the government through the proposed currency bill was going to compel them to become members of the Federal Reserve System. Williams took occasion to explain clearly that no bank would be compelled to become a member of the Federal Reserve System; that the government was merely saying: “Here is the system. What do you want to do; stay in it or get out of it?”⁴⁹

Some were criticizing the enactment of the currency bill because it would provide a means through which the Democratic party might obtain control of and manipulate the currency throughout the country. Although he was one of the leading members of the party then in power, Williams stated that it would be worse than an ordinary crime, “it would be a sacrilege,” if politics were allowed to influence appointments to the various positions of the Federal Reserve System. The Senator from Mississippi was very definite as to what should be done in case a member of either the Senate or the House were willing to “lower himself to the level” of going to the Federal Reserve Board in order to secure a reward for personal or party service. Anyone guilty

⁴⁷ Williams to Wilson, October 7, 1913, in Williams Papers, Cedar Grove Plantation. Quotations in *New York Times*, October 15, 1913; *Jackson Daily News*, October 17, 1913.

⁴⁸ Wilson to Williams, October 23, 1913, in Williams Papers.

⁴⁹ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 2 Sess., 474, 602.

of doing such a thing "ought to be kicked out of this House or out of the other one." ⁵⁰ Williams acted according to this opinion. Early in 1914 he received several letters from constituents recommending two of the leading bankers of Mississippi for positions in the Federal Reserve System. ⁵¹ In each instance Williams sent the letter to the President accompanied by something like the following:

"I am sincere in my hope that no recommendation coming from a Senator or a Congressman in connection with the appointment of members of the Federal Reserve Board shall receive any consideration of a political character, and I have made up my mind for that reason not to make any recommendations at all, because a man cannot divorce himself from the political situation which he happens to occupy." ⁵²

Perhaps the best speech Williams made during the enactment of the currency bill was on December 15 in reply to some amendments offered by Root. Williams accused the Senator from New York of stating things that he knew were incorrect. Root was, he believed, "a man of remarkable native ability, a man of still more remarkable intellectual and social culture, and a great lawyer." To Williams it was "absolutely wonderful what a wreck in a sound brain can be wrought by a presidential bee." ⁵³ Williams "made an impassioned defense of the Glass plan as well as a pungent assault on Root's speech." ⁵⁴

The Republicans were bitterly criticizing the methods of the party in power. The Democrats were not permitting the political enemy to sit in committee meetings until after the

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1140.

⁵¹ F. W. Foote of Hattiesburg and Captain Lyerly of Meridian. See letters of recommendations in Williams Papers.

⁵² Williams to Wilson, January 8, 1914, *ibid.*

⁵³ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 2 Sess., 902.

⁵⁴ James E. Palmer, Jr., *Carter Glass, Unreconstructed Rebel* (Roanoke, Va., 1938), 101; Jessup, *Elihu Root*, II, 246, claims that Root's speech "brought the bill more nearly into conformity with the House measure fathered by Glass."

bills were drawn up. They were bringing into play the lock-step system which Williams had used at times when he was minority leader. This system of legislative procedure had been made famous by Thomas B. Reed and Joseph G. Cannon in the House. Senator Williams had a characteristic joke to illustrate his position. An old Negro woman in Greenwood, Mississippi, had an unusual experience. Her mistress had company unexpectedly and sent the master out to get Aunt Martha, the cook, to come at once. He found Old Aunt Martha on the street with a brickbat in her hand indulging in rather extreme language.

He said, "Aunt Martha, what is the matter?"

"Well, some poor white trash just come along here with one of them new machines that run without any horses, and come mighty near running over me. If I could have got this brickbat in time I would have stove in his brains."

"Well, your mistress wants you to come, and to come rapidly; you must help her out; she wants you to come in five or six minutes."

"How do you expect me to get way out there in five or six minutes?" Aunt Martha inquired.

"I will carry you out in my auto."

He put her in. "The old darky looked a little out of place at first," but then "surrendered herself to the luxurious cushions." Soon a Negro man crossed the road very slowly. Aunt Martha yelled, "Run right on. He has no business at all crossing the road in front of our car, anyhow." Williams felt just like Old Aunt Martha.⁵⁵

In its final form the Glass-Owen bill passed the House on December 22, and the following day it passed the Senate. In both houses the victory was won by substantial majorities. At six o'clock the evening of December 23, President Wilson signed the bill with three gold pens. One of them he gave to Glass, one to Owen, and one to McAdoo.⁵⁶ A few minutes later the President was on his way to

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1475.

⁵⁶ McAdoo, *Crowded Years*, 256.

Pass Christian, Mississippi, a small town on the Gulf, to spend the Christmas holidays. Williams was "yearning to see the folks at home,"⁵⁷ but remained at his residence in Washington as Congress continued to be officially in session.

Williams for many years had been a student of the trust question. Perhaps no problem at this stage of his career furnished him more worry than this one. There were two perplexing phases of the question about which he had a mental conflict. Should trusts be tolerated under strict regulation, or should they be prohibited? He would never tolerate them without governmental supervision. Earlier, Williams had declared that trusts should be prohibited. The formation of the trusts had been one phase of the concentration of wealth and power which had been so pronounced in the half-century previous to the Wilson Administration. Williams had introduced a bill (S.B. 4747) in the second session of the Sixty-second Congress to regulate corporations engaged in interstate commerce and to provide penalties for violations. These regulations provided (1) that a company must not hold any shares of stock in any other corporation, (2) that the voting should be according to shares, (3) that no company or corporation should have any vote or choice directly or indirectly in the charter of a second company, (4) that its surplus was to be prohibited above 50 per cent of its outstanding capital stock, (5) that its indebtedness was not to exceed the outstanding stock plus the surplus, (6) that the corporation must comply with the limitations of the law of the state, territory, or district in which it had established offices, and (7) that it should not directly or indirectly stifle fair competition.⁵⁸ Williams had appeared

⁵⁷ Williams to Sam D. Jones, December 3, 1913, in Williams Papers.

⁵⁸ John Sharp Williams, "Control of Corporations, Persons and Firms Engaged in Interstate Commerce," in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, XLII (1912), 310-30. This bill was published in full.

before the Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce on February 16, 1912, presented the bill which he had introduced earlier, and made a very lengthy argument in favor of its enactment. One member of the committee was "amazed" at the able argument coming from a state rights Democrat.⁵⁹ A brief but definite outline of the argument made by the Senator before this committee was published in July, 1912, in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*.

Williams had seen to it that Wilson was acquainted with the bill that he had introduced in the Senate in 1911. He had requested the President to read the argument that he later presented before the Senate committee. In October, 1913, while the currency bill was before the Senate, Williams received a letter from the President inviting him to come to the White House sometime in the near future for a discussion of the trust problem. The President also saw two ways open in the solution of the problem, but he wanted to satisfy his mind more clearly as to which was the better of the two methods.⁶⁰ At this conference Williams apparently urged the President to delay the introduction of any trust bill.⁶¹ Soon after his return from his Christmas vacation in southern Mississippi, the President wrote Williams that he believed any method proposed would ultimately have to be used in any further systematic endeavor to control the trusts.⁶² Would the Williams bill be a model for the trust act? ⁶³

On January 20 the President appeared before Congress and urged laws to prevent interlocking directorates, to give more power to the Interstate Commerce Commission, to

⁵⁹ Arthur B. Darling (ed.), *The Public Papers of Francis G. Newlands* (Boston, 1932), I, 430-31.

⁶⁰ Wilson to Williams, October 23, 1913, in Williams Papers.

⁶¹ See Baker, *Woodrow Wilson*, IV, 366. Also Wilson to Williams, January 15, 1914, in Williams Papers.

⁶² Wilson to Williams, January 15, 1914, in Williams Papers.

⁶³ Frank D. Lander, "Williams Bill to be Model for Trust Act," in *Jackson Daily News*, November 10, 1913.

clarify the existing Sherman Antitrust Act, and to create a Federal Trade Commission. "I listened with delight to your message in Congress yesterday," wrote Williams. "I agree with you in all except the favoring of a so-called Trade Commission. . . . I still wish you would see the point about requiring the state charters themselves to contain certain broad provisions and certain restrictions before the corporation could be adopted in interstate commerce at all. That is the cardinal feature in my mind." The best example of this difficulty was the expressed provision included in nearly all charters which gave "corporations the authority to hold stock in other corporations."⁶⁴ Wilson was "genuinely sorry" that Williams disagreed with his recommendation for a trade commission. He hoped that when the Senator saw the bill and the simple lines along which it was drawn, he would change his mind. The President had informed himself through the Bureau of Corporations on the public opinion of the country, and had found that the great desire was for the creation of a trade commission. Studious attention had been given to the trust problem by Wilson because he was as anxious as anyone could be "not to start in the wrong direction."⁶⁵

Many of the suggestions made by the President in his message to Congress solidified as bills. The first of these measures was enacted into law on September 26. It provided for the creation of a Federal Trade Commission composed of a bipartisan body of five members. This commission was to have general powers in the fields of investigation of unfair practices and public relations. The Clayton Antitrust bill, which strengthened the Sherman Antitrust law of 1890, was adopted the middle of the following month. A third measure, the Rayburn bill, which gave the Interstate Commerce Commission power to pass judgment on stocks and bonds issued by railroads and other common carriers,

⁶⁴ Williams to Wilson, January 21, 1914, in Williams Papers.

⁶⁵ Wilson to Williams, January 27, 1914, *ibid.*

passed the House early in June with a sweeping majority. Owing to the beginning of the European war, the strong opposition that developed in the Senate proved fatal to its enactment. It was the first casualty of the Wilsonian economic reformation.⁶⁶

In the middle of the summer when these bills were being discussed, Williams received "a multitude of letters" from his constituents advising him and other members of Congress to "shut up shop," and "go home." These letters, he declared, were sent by monopolistic corporations to various people of his state with the request that they be forwarded to the members of the Mississippi delegation in Congress. In short, the letters stated that the politicians were a menace to business.⁶⁷ Williams cared nothing for statements received in such a manner. He was "clearly of the opinion that the only thing that is doing any harm is the state of uncertainty as to what the legislation will be." He was confident that "we are not going to make asses of ourselves."⁶⁸ Williams predicted an era of prosperity following the enactment of the antitrust laws.⁶⁹ Four days earlier, Wilson had made a similar prediction.⁷⁰ The critics were largely of the same group that had made many threats during the passage of the tariff and currency reforms. They were afraid only that the Administration was going to carry out the Democratic platform and that in carrying it out the masses of mankind would be "righteously and fairly treated."⁷¹

Penrose, Lodge, Bristow, and others began to oppose the Democratic Administration in 1913, and continued to do so thereafter. Their criticism was leveled at the domination, as they termed it, of Wilson over Congress. Lodge confined

⁶⁶ Baker, *Woodrow Wilson*, IV, 372-74.

⁶⁷ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 2 Sess., 11,173. That Wilson's inauguration was viewed with evident apprehension by big business is the conclusion of Professor Tansill, who has investigated thoroughly the sources of the period. See Tansill, *America Goes to War*, 67.

⁶⁸ Williams to Wilson, June 16, 1914, in Williams Papers.

⁶⁹ *New York Times*, June 27, 1914.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, June 22, 1914.

⁷¹ Williams to J. R. Buckwalter, June 17, 1914, in Williams Papers.

his remarks chiefly to the foreign policy of the President, whereas the others were concerned more with domestic problems. Williams made his first loyalty speech in reply to this opposition on November 3, 1913. He lauded Wilson as the greatest President since Jefferson.⁷² Many times thereafter the Mississippian took the floor to defend the occupant of the White House from the insinuations of political enemies in the Senate. As a result of a speech that Williams made in April, 1914, in answer to criticism from Bristow, the President penned the Mississippian a letter thanking him for having come to his defense against the Senator from Kansas: "My friends have stood by me nobly and none of them have interpreted my motive and my plan of action at this trying time more truly or more as I would wish them to interpret them than you have."⁷³ Williams replied the next day. He expressed great appreciation for the letter and lamented that he had not done much better. He had become so discouraged in view of the "failure that you and I have both made to keep the peace, wanting to do nothing less, that I did not have my usual courage with me." Bristow and Penrose, Williams declared, were doing nothing but trying to embarrass the President.⁷⁴ By July 29 Williams was expressing confidentially to friends that he was "thoroughly discouraged" with the way the Democratic program was being delayed in the Senate. He had determined, however, to retain a complete allegiance to the captain of his political team:

"I believe it to be my duty to do nothing which might result in breaking up the team. Even if I do not endorse the method of the captain in one particular game, I play it and stay with the team so that the team may afterwards win other games. The game is the game of the people against special privilege; it has more than a thousand different sides. I

⁷² *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 1 Sess., 5852-53.

⁷³ Wilson to Williams, April 22, 1914, in Williams Papers.

⁷⁴ Williams to Wilson, April 23, 1914, *ibid.*

cannot utter a word of public criticism. It is, in my opinion, better that we should win an inefficient act of legislation solidly and harmoniously than to split up amongst ourselves, thereby discrediting ourselves and losing all possible power of helping the people in many other respects.

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"I long since made up my mind that whenever I could not stand for my team—which in politics spells my party—I would come out in a public letter to that effect, and tear off the uniform and go somewhere else and join some other team."⁷⁵

It is significant that though privately, in letters to Wilson, Williams condemned the Federal Trade Commission, he supported it on the floor of the Senate. The real danger from the trust problem could not be remedied by law. Laws would help, but statutes did not rectify immoral business ethics. Williams expressed these views very clearly:

"You know of old, I suppose, that I have very little confidence in the power of legislation to correct bad morals, either in finance or anywhere else. I think it will have to come, in the long run, from the educated hearts and minds and tastes of people in the business world, as well as outside of it. When the time comes when men will act as gentlemen in business there will not be much necessity for laws to regulate it. Until then of course we have to strike pretty much in the dark, doing the best we can, floundering a good deal, and not coming out very satisfactorily anywhere. . . .

"Since the new tariff was enacted, for example, jobbers and wholesalers are buying very much cheaper a great many articles of staple goods and yet the retailer, up to a very recent period, had not reduced his prices. The consequence is that the consumer, knowing that the retailer is

⁷⁵ *Id.* to Robert R. Reed, July 29, 1914, *ibid.*

not reducing his prices, is buying from hand to hand to make him do it." ⁷⁶

All of the debates in which Williams participated during this period were not upon national problems. One of them dealt with perhaps the most amusing incident of Williams' entire public career in Washington. During his term in the House there was an attempt to have the name of Sixteenth Street, upon which Williams lived, changed to the Avenue of the Presidents. Williams endeavored to hold all efforts in check, but during the two years he was absent from Washington the name was changed. When he returned to his Washington home, he was living on the Avenue of the Presidents instead of on Sixteenth Street. His speech, which is generally credited with restoring the original name to the street, was John Sharp Williams at his best. He stated that several things had influenced the change of name, chief of which was society, which he spelled "with a 'S-A-S' and a 'S-I-E' and a 'T-Y.'" The Avenue of the Presidents read so nicely on a social calling card.⁷⁷ It had been suggested that the street be named the "Executive Avenue." This was not done, however, for it seemed that the residents might be excuted. Then there was some attempt to call it the "Avenue of the Allies." This snobbish respect and reverence for official title was not even found in London or St. Petersburg, and there was not even an "Avenue of the Kaiser" in Berlin. If there were to be an "Avenue of the Presidents," there should be an "Avenue of the Vice Presidents," and an "Avenue of the Cabinet," and by all means an "Avenue of the Senators." Senator Charles S. Thomas agreed with Williams and wished to introduce a resolution that Fifteenth Street be changed to the "Alley of the Vice Presidents." Williams added that for the sake of brevity let the Senator from Colorado strike out the word "Presidents" and let it go at that. Williams appealed to all those

⁷⁶ *Id.* to Evan S. Edwards, August 1, 1914, *ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 2 Sess., 4738.

who "love high thinking and plain living" to accept his resolution.⁷⁸ He urged Congressman John W. Smith, chairman of the House Committee on the District of Columbia, to use his influence to secure the change of the name of the street back to its earlier name. "I sincerely hope," the letter read, "that you and other members of the committee may even yet divest Sixteenth Street of its masquerade clothes and . . . give it its true baptismal name."⁷⁹ His wish was finally granted; no doubt the pride of the "Sassiety" folk was badly injured.

The appointment of two members to the Supreme Court in Wilson's first term created a furor. The first vacancy occurred in 1914. To fill it Wilson elevated his Attorney General, James McReynolds, a native of Kentucky. Because of his conservatism and his association with the vested interests the confirmation of McReynolds met great opposition from several western Senators. Norris of Nebraska spoke for three days against confirmation. Vardaman had the distinction, if distinction it was, of being the only Democratic Senator to vote with the opposition.⁸⁰

A second vacancy occurred in the court early in 1916 when Justice Charles E. Hughes, in anticipation of receiving the Republican nomination for President, resigned from the bench. The liberalism of Woodrow Wilson was confirmed when he named Louis D. Brandeis as Associate Justice. Brandeis had spent his legal career in fighting battles for the people. The ratification of his appointment was opposed by a majority of the legal profession and by many businessmen because of his known attitude toward the concentration of wealth. It is significant that all the letters opposing Brandeis in Williams' papers were from states on the Atlantic seaboard. In answering criticisms of Brandeis' appointment to the highest tribunal, Williams

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 4738-41.

⁷⁹ Williams to John W. Smith, March 9, 1914, in Williams Papers.

⁸⁰ *New York Times*, August 30, 1914; *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 2 Sess., 14,421.

gave reasons for his support. He certainly would not reject him on account of his race and religion; on the contrary, "I would vote to confirm him because some narrow-minded people might think he had been rejected on that ground." Again, Williams would vote for confirmation because of "the character and plutocratic tendencies and unpatriotic proposals of some of the men who were opposing his confirmation."⁸¹ He recognized that Brandeis was "infected with the modern ideas of collectivism," ideas which were foreign to Williams, but the Senator did not believe that a man's views upon questions, largely academic, "ought to militate against him if he is honest and if a good lawyer."⁸² Finally, Williams "had rather have a radical man upon the Supreme Court Bench who would be sobered by his responsibility than to have a conservative who would be made more conservative by the same responsibility."⁸³

In replying to letters received from Senators Reed and Stone of Missouri, requesting his influence to secure the National Democratic Convention of 1916 for St. Louis, Williams promised to "jine-in." He urged, however, as the best solution to the quadrennial problem the erection of a large convention hall at Washington in order that all the great national conventions could be held in the national capital. "This disgustful business of cities bidding against one another ought to be stopped. Frequently the thing results in a sort of . . . open corruption."⁸⁴

Williams continued to be mentioned by many of his friends and in some of the friendly press for positions of higher honor in the Democratic party. He was suggested as a presidential candidate though no serious movement was made in that direction. He was again spoken of as a vice-presidential candidate. There was talk of his being named to the vacancy on the Supreme Court in 1916. After Wil-

⁸¹ Williams to Hayne Davis, February 7, 1916, in Williams Papers.

⁸² *Id.* to James Galloway, February 26, 1916, *ibid.*

⁸³ *Id.* to Robert R. Reed, February 5, 1916, *ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Id.* to James A. Reed, November 16, 1915, *ibid.*

son's re-election in November of that year, some persons again mentioned Williams for the Cabinet during Wilson's second term. To one of the many inquiring friends, Senator Williams replied in characteristic fashion: "I would not be one of the Cabinet if the place were offered to me, and I have no hope whatever of being a member of the Supreme Court." ⁸⁵

In midsummer of 1916 Williams received a letter from the chairman of the Democratic National Committee requesting that he make a speech in the Senate on the achievements of the Democratic Administration during the past three years. This was to be placed at the disposal of the publicity department to be "sent broadcast over the entire country." ⁸⁶ On the same day, in a letter to Homer S. Cummings of the Democratic National Committee, Williams stated that he was returning home after the adjournment of Congress in order to get some rest. For twenty years he had been at the service of the national committee during presidential election years. "I shall try to do a little something, although I think I have borne pretty near my share of the heat of the day." ⁸⁷ Williams felt unequal to the task of writing an article for the *Yale Review*, upon the written invitation of its editor, Dr. Wilbur L. Cross.⁸⁸ The work as chairman of a subcommittee dealing with parts of the new revenue measure took all of his time.⁸⁹

In 1916 Williams was up for re-election in Mississippi. Although it had seemed for more than a year that he would have formidable opposition, none actually appeared. This was a singular honor and testimony to the satisfaction that he had given to his constituents. Many communications of congratulations flowed into the Senator's office from friends throughout the country. None did he appreciate more than

⁸⁵ *Id.* to Mrs. Margaret A. Meek Tarble, January 19, 1917, *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Vance C. McCormick to Williams, July 20, 1916, *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Williams to Homer S. Cummings, July 20, 1916, *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Wilbur L. Cross to Williams, June 11, 1916, *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Williams to Cross, July 14, 1916, *ibid.*

those from the President, Senator James D. Phelan, and Secretary Franklin K. Lane.⁹⁰

The New York *World* requested Williams to make a thousand-word analysis of the acceptance speech of former Justice Hughes when notified that he was the Republican nominee for President. The Senator analyzed it as a "platitudinous rehash of negation and blind partisan hate." It viewed the Democrats with alarm, but it did not point with pride to any Republican achievement.⁹¹ Later in the campaign the Chicago *Daily News* requested a statement from Williams giving his reasons why Wilson should be re-elected. These reasons were promptly stated under fifteen headings. Every worth-while piece of legislation that the Administration had enacted during the past three and a half years was summarized.⁹²

Efforts were made to get Williams to speak again in the New England states in this campaign. The Senator wanted to go to the Middle West; so he refused the request of the chairman of the speaker's bureau.⁹³ Williams asked to be routed from St. Louis north through Missouri and Iowa until he got west of Chicago, then eastward through Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio south to Cincinnati. His requests were partly granted. He was sent to Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois.⁹⁴

Near the close of Congress, Williams' work had completely got the better of his health and he was in bed for six days. Within a short while after the session closed he went to French Lick, Indiana, for a fifteen-day period of rest. Wilson wrote from Shadow Lawn to convey his best wishes

⁹⁰ Wilson to Williams, August 14, 1916; Williams to James D. Phelan, November 12, 1916; Franklin K. Lane to Williams, November 13, 1916, *ibid.*

⁹¹ Quoted in Jackson *Daily News*, August 12, 1916.

⁹² *Ibid.*, September 30, October 2, 1916. See also, *Meridian Star*, October 2, 1916.

⁹³ Cummings to Williams, August 19, 1916; Williams to Cummings, August 19, 1916, in Williams Papers.

⁹⁴ *Id.* to Charles F. Horner, September 20, 1916; Horner to Williams, October 4, 1916, *ibid.*

for the Senator's improved health. The President also assured Williams of the high value he placed upon the service that the Senator would be able to render throughout the rest of the campaign.⁹⁵ During the weeks just before the election Wilson was kept informed of Williams' actions, speeches, and opinions in regard to the public mind. The President complimented the Senator highly on the caliber of the speeches which he was making and his ability to get at the meat of any question which he discussed. Additional copies of some of his speeches were ordered by the President to be distributed.⁹⁶ Williams closed his speaking engagements at the end of October in order to be able to fulfill an engagement at Jackson, Mississippi, on November 1. Writing from his home on the eve of the election, he predicted that the vote was "going to be awfully close."⁹⁷ After learning the results, the planter-Senator wrote to a very dear friend: "The people have once more proven themselves capable of self-government."⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Wilson to *id.*, September 27, 1916; Williams to Wilson, October 4, 1916, *ibid.*

⁹⁶ Wilson to Williams, October 17, 1916; Joseph P. Tumulty to *id.*, October 20, 1916, *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Williams to T. W. Brame, November 6, 1916, *ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Id.* to Franklin K. Lane, November 21, 1916, *ibid.*

Chapter XI

IMMIGRATION, THE MEXICAN PROBLEM, AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS

PRESIDENT TAFT vetoed an immigration bill during the latter part of his Administration because it contained a clause providing for a literacy test for immigrants before they were admitted into the United States. Williams had spoken in favor of, and had been instrumental in, having this provision included in the bill. A similar measure came up in 1914. On December 19, in answer to speeches made by Senators James E. Martine of New Jersey, William J. Stone of Missouri, and James H. Lewis of Illinois favoring immigration without any literacy test, Williams practically repeated a speech that he had made during Taft's Administration. He contended that democratic institutions could not be established anywhere except "in a temple that is supported by . . . liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice." He did not believe that any of these four pillars could exist with an ignorant electorate. Some of the Senators thought it was cruel to prevent a man from entering the United States merely because he could neither read nor write. An illiterate adult, Williams believed, was not only ignorant but, in a majority of cases, displayed a lamentable "lack of enterprise, or initiative, or willingness to help himself."¹

Williams endeavored to secure an amendment to the immigration bill to give special privileges to refugees from

¹ *Pittsburgh Iron City Trades Journal*, January 22, 1915, devoted a whole page to the reproduction of this speech.

Belgium in the form of inducements to promote emigration to the United States. The only basis upon which he could support this amendment was sympathy with these people. In expressing this feeling he denied that he was breaking Wilson's request for absolute neutrality.² The Belgians, it was reported, were being molested and cruelly treated in every way imaginable by the Germans at that time. Some of Williams' friends, however, doubted the wisdom of encouraging them to emigrate, as only the most undesirable group would leave. Just as Southerners remained in their homes after the devastations of the War Between the States, so would Belgians of the better classes remain despite the occupation of their country by warring armies.³

Williams believed that the continued reception of illiterates was one of the main reasons for the continual low wages among laborers in mines and factories.⁴ Countries in southern Europe in particular were objecting strenuously to the trend of the discussion in the American Congress. Italy had refused to participate in the Panama Exposition, giving the threatened enactment of the immigration literacy test as the reason. A young Mississippian from the American Embassy at Rome wrote Williams of the reaction there. In reply Williams remarked that the American endeavor to eliminate ignorance at home and, at the same time, to import more of it did not seem to be consistent.⁵

Williams received a number of letters complimenting him on his stand on the immigration bill. These were not confined to members of any political party or to any particular section of the country. From a midwestern state a citizen wrote: "Some of us Americans take a great deal of interest in your noble stand in regard to the Immigration Literacy Bill. Although a Republican and differing with

² *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 3 Sess., 850.

³ John L. Burnett to Williams, December 21, 1914, in Williams Papers.

⁴ Williams to J. B. Clark, March 9, 1914, *ibid.*

⁵ Norval Richardson to Williams, February 24, 1914; Williams to Richardson, March 9, 1914, *ibid.*

you on some things, yet some of us are heart and soul with you in the American stand you have taken." ⁶ The National Council of the Daughters of America, 90,000 strong, through their National Vice-Councillor, wrote a "highly appreciative" letter and proclaimed immigration a nonpartisan "question of vital importance to American Institutions . . . and for the future of our American children." ⁷

The bill was passed by Congress and found its way to the President's desk. Williams hoped that Wilson would see fit to sign it although he was afraid with good reason that "some entangling promises" had been made during the campaign. He believed promises that bind a party should be made in the open, in a public way, by candidates or delegates to a convention. They should never constitute a part of the "Invisible Empire." ⁸ The President was in an embarrassing situation and found it very distasteful to set his judgment against so many of his friends and associates in public life. The situation, frankly stated, was: "I myself personally made the most explicit statements at the time of the Presidential election about this subject to groups of our fellow-citizens of foreign extraction whom I wish to treat with perfect frankness and for whom I have entire respect." ⁹ In 1917, under the stress of war, Congress was to muster up sufficient sentiment against foreigners and hyphenated Americans to enact a similar bill over the President's veto.

Wilson, largely a student of domestic affairs, was confronted with many serious foreign problems during his entire Administration. Although Bryan, to whom he was obligated politically, had been made Secretary of State, the President's action at the very beginning of his Administration indicated that he might assume the direction of foreign affairs. His announced Latin-American policy was: "(1) that the United States would not recognize governments

⁶ John A. Idall to Williams, December 31, 1914, *ibid.*

⁷ Elizabeth P. Howe to *id.*, January 1, 1915, *ibid.*

⁸ Williams to Wilson, January 4, 1915, *ibid.*

⁹ Wilson to Williams, January 7, 1915, *ibid.*

founded upon force; (2) that it would assist, in every way possible, the establishment of democratic government; (3) that the armed forces of the United States would not be used to protect capital investments; (4) that the United States would tolerate no interference with its leadership in Latin American affairs.”¹⁰ The United States sought nothing in Central and South America “except the lasting interests of the peoples of the two continents, the security of the governments intended for the people . . . and the development of personal and trade relationships.”¹¹

Wilson's Latin-American policy was put to a severe test by Mexico. For several years preceding 1910, Mexican-American relations had been characterized by peace and the flowing of American capital into Mexico. During this period Mexico was ruled by the iron hand of Porfirio Diaz, who stamped out revolution and, in the process, crushed every vestige of liberty for the masses of his people. In 1910 Francisco I. Madero led a revolt for the restoration of the constitutional rights which had been disregarded for many years. President Taft immediately recognized the Madero government and embargoed shipments of arms destined for Madero's opponents. Gradually, however, as it became doubtful that Madero could keep the situation in hand, Taft began to shift in his attitude. He warned Madero that American interests must be protected. The American ambassador in Mexico City, Henry L. Wilson, urged prompt and severe action as a penalty for the infringement rights of American citizens. Within a month of the end of Taft's Administration Madero was murdered by Victoriana Huerta. Although Ambassador Wilson urged *de facto* recognition of the Huerta regime, Taft refused and bequeathed the problem to Woodrow Wilson.

¹⁰ Dwight L. Dumond, *Roosevelt to Roosevelt, the United States in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1937), 193.

¹¹ Wilson's paper read before his Cabinet, March 11, 1913. See Baker, *Woodrow Wilson*, IV, 67; David F. Houston, *Eight Years with Wilson's Cabinet, 1913-1920* (Garden City, N.Y., 1926), I, 43-44.

The new President refused to recognize Huerta in any way because he felt that to do so would be to approve reaction, dictatorship, and everything which was the antithesis of his political principles. Wilson reminded himself that he was "President of the United States and not of a small group with vested interests in Mexico."¹² When Henry Lane Wilson got no response to his urgent appeals for intervention, he resigned. President Wilson then sent John Lind as his personal representative but he, too, soon favored military intervention.

The Republicans in the Senate began to grow suspicious of the Administration's Mexican policy. Resolutions demanding an investigation were introduced. The President attended a meeting of the Foreign Relations Committee on August 9 and discussed at length his Mexican policy. The discussion led by Henry C. Lodge and Boies Penrose was taken to the floor of the Senate. Williams felt that there was an "organized and syndicated effort to bring about war. . . . It is time . . . that we should pause." There was nothing illustrious in overrunning such a crippled government.¹³ Wilson appeared before Congress on August 27 to explain the Lind Mission. In Mobile in October he uttered his famous message against "dollar diplomacy," and declared that the United States desired no further territory and, by implication, criticized the European nations who had recognized Huerta *de facto*. By November, Wilson had made a deal with England promising settlement of the Panama Canal Tolls question in return for support of his Mexican policy. The embargo on arms was removed to permit munitions to reach Huerta's enemies, and at the same time American warships were dispatched to Mexican waters to see that Huerta received no help from Europe.

A resulting incident brought the United States to the

¹² Joseph P. Tumulty, *Woodrow Wilson As I Know Him* (Garden City, N.Y., 1921), 146.

¹³ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 1 Sess., 3217.

verge of war with Mexico. Huerta had issued orders that no American ships be permitted to land at Tampico. Some American sailors from the U.S.S. *Dolphin* who entered the city to buy gasoline were arrested by a squad of armed soldiers. Upon Huerta's request the Americans were promptly released and an apology was made, but Admiral T. Mayo demanded a more formal apology—the military salute of the American flag.

The Senate took due recognition of the critical nature of the situation. Wilson's demand on April 18 that the American flag be saluted at Tampico "before 6 p. m. tomorrow brought a chorus of approval from the Senators."¹⁴ The patience of the American people had its limit. Williams hated to see war come, but Huerta had "done all that he could to bring things in the present to pass, apparently to save his face in Mexico."¹⁵ Washington was in the midst of the excitement of war. "People paraded up and down the streets . . . as if war were a thing to welcome and be glad of instead of a thing to make us thoughtful and sad."¹⁶

During the days following, when Huerta apparently was playing for time, it became known that a German ship, the *Ypirango*, loaded with munitions for Huerta was enroute to Vera Cruz. In a four-cornered conversation among Wilson, Bryan, Josephus Daniels, Secretary of Navy, and Joseph P. Tumulty, the President requested Daniels to order Vera Cruz taken at once. Admiral Mayo fired on the port, seized it and the *Ypirango*.

Senator Lodge endeavored to have the Senate adopt a resolution demanding a declaration of war against Mexico; the Democrats wanted a resolution supporting the President. In a speech which "covered everything from the history of the Civil War to the progress of the race,"¹⁷ Williams clashed with Lodge. It was necessary for the Vice-President

¹⁴ New York Times, April 19, 1914.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Williams to Sam H. Stribling, April 20, 1914, in Williams Papers.

¹⁷ New York Times, April 22, 1914.

to clear the Senate galleries during the speech because of the great demonstration of approval.¹⁸ The Mississippian hoped to concentrate public opinion in opposition to Huerta himself rather than the Mexican government, in order that when Huerta changed his attitude or was overthrown, the United States would be satisfied. No excuse could be offered for our expansion into Mexico. In a private letter, Williams turned more light on the situation. "We make war upon the individual for the reason that he does not represent anything except himself. We say to him in substance, 'You have a lot of governmental pretensions and amongst them you have pretended to tweak the American nose and to insult the American flag and the American uniform, and we are going to hold you personally responsible.' That leaves us a chance to leave Mexico after we have intervened and after we have settled this gentleman's hash one way or another."¹⁹ Williams wrote to another person that he "must stand behind the President of the United States with what little intellect and what little character I possess."²⁰

If Lodge's resolution for a declaration of war against the Mexican people had been enacted, the United States would have escaped war only by a miracle. Williams appealed to the Progressives to stand with the Democrats behind the President. He pointed out that if they voted with the Republicans, there would be no progressive legislation until peace, and they would thus be "playing into the hands of the reactionaries."²¹

At least one American of note was not very much interested in the seriousness of the Mexican problem. "I am not half as much bothered about Mexico as I am about th' cats in the backyard next door." High diplomacy was no more to Mr. Dooley "than so much aljibbera." It pained him to

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Williams to William C. Dix, April 23, 1914, in Williams Papers.

²⁰ *Id.* to George F. Peabody, April 24, 1914, *ibid.*

²¹ *New York Times*, April 22, 1914.

see "Dock Wilson agytatin' his mind and wastin' letters . . . about gunmen when our own counthry is on the brink iv civil war over th' baseball situation." ²²

Conditions continued to become more strained. In July, 1914, Huerta gave way to Carranza, but Mexican troubles continued. Carranza was little more co-operative in his attitude than his predecessor. Although the United States granted him *de facto* recognition in October, 1915, he was unable to control rebel chieftains who refused to acknowledge his authority. Raids across the American border by Francisco Villa caused Wilson to dispatch some of the regular army and National Guard to the Mexican border. American troops under the leadership of John J. Pershing went into Mexico and for several months sought in vain the elusive Villa in the mountains of northern and central Mexico. Not all of the soldiers were withdrawn across the Rio Grande until after the United States had entered the World War in April, 1917. The problems involved were in no sense settled when the troops left, but Williams rejoiced that the President had kept us out of war with Mexico. ²³

In addition to the Mexican question, Wilson found the problem of Panama Canal tolls left over from the Taft Administration. The Hay-Pauncefote Treaty of 1902 had stipulated that upon the completion of the canal, all ships were to be treated equally. Later it was decided that tolls were to be charged and that the ships of European nations were to pay the same price as those of the United States. In the summer of 1912 the Senate passed a bill which gave coastwise trading vessels freedom of passage through the canal. While some of the Senators doubted our ability to make this concession without violating treaty obligations, most agreed that we had the right. Williams, although admitting that the treaty was unfortunate for our national interest, adhered to the idea that we must "construe it with-

²² *Ibid.*, March 8, 1914.

²³ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 3 Sess., 1493.

in the four corners of the instrument itself.”²⁴ Would the exemption of coastwise vessels from toll be a discrimination against foreign vessels since such vessels were prohibited from the coastwise trade anyway? O’Gorman believed the point well taken.

If the American government intended to act, should it act as a government having complete jurisdiction over the problem? Should it act jointly with England, or should it refer the problem to a court of arbitration and let a third party decide whether or not America had the power to exempt her coastwise trading vessels? Albert B. Cummins thought that the United States could not afford to permit any arbitration in regard to the measure. In his opinion, it would be the United States against every other nation in the world, for all were interested in the commerce of the Canal. All their interests were in direct opposition to those of the United States.²⁵ Williams believed that the Hague Tribunal would not be guided by any pecuniary motive in the matter. “I stand . . . for the principle that the judicial proceedings which have been instituted between man and man under government shall some day become instituted between nation and nation in the entire world.”²⁶

The bill, acted upon by the House on May 23, finally passed the Senate on August 7. Williams voted for the measure on the basis of a decision handed down in 1904 by the United States Supreme Court in *Olson v. Smith* that foreign vessels never had any standing in the coastwise trade.²⁷ The enactment of the measure by Congress was the signal for a “fresh outburst of indignation abroad.” Formal protest was made by the British government on the ground that it was a violation of the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty.²⁸

The question was still unsettled when Wilson became President in 1913, and the Democratic Administration soon

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 62 Cong., 2 Sess., 9183.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 10,384.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 10,388.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 10,387. See *Olson v. Smith*, 195 U.S. 332 (1904).

²⁸ Sullivan, *Our Times*, IV, 587.

gave evidence of a desire to end the controversy between the United States and England. At the instigation of Wilson a new bill was introduced into Congress, providing for the repeal of the provision that exempted American coastwise vessels from paying tolls for passage through the Panama Canal. Williams' stand on the question in 1912 was now thrown in his face by Senator William A. Smith of Michigan. The former admitted that he had not changed his mind as to the legal conclusion that the treaty did not prohibit the United States from exempting bona fide coastwise trading vessels from tolls. At that time, contended the Mississippian, he was following a legal construction of the problem. He admitted that he was following a more important Democratic doctrine now, which, although Williams did not say so, had emanated privately from the White House. The former vote, he admitted, was one of the few acts that he had committed in his public life of which he was now ashamed.²⁹ The attitude of Borah and other Republicans reminded Williams of an experience that he had had on his plantation. Once, he entered into a five-year contract with a man to clear and put under cultivation certain land. After a year the man came and said: "John, I will have to 'rue back' on that contract."

"Why?" asked Williams.

"Because that contract is not profitable to me."

Williams replied, "Suppose it had turned out not to be profitable to me, would you have rued back?"

"Oh, no," he admitted, "but I have got to rue back now."

"I do not see that," said Williams.

"Well, John," continued the man, "I have got to where you have got to let me. All I have got to do is to refuse to go on with it. All my property is in my wife's name, and

²⁹ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 2 Sess., 5461; *New York Times*, March 26, 1914; Williams to J. A. Gibson, April 6, 1914; *id.* to T. P. Hackleman, April 10, 1914, in Williams Papers.

you can not do anything with me.”³⁰ Williams permitted the man to “rue back.” Naïve, yes! Honest, no!

The Panama Canal Tolls bill was enacted by the Senate in June, 1914. Vardaman, the junior Senator from Mississippi, came out openly against the Administration in its efforts to enact this measure. The basis for his opposition, he contended, was the Democratic platform of 1912 which he, as a member of the resolutions committee, had aided in drafting. It seemed for some time as if the two Senators from Mississippi were going to engage in a fistic encounter on the Senate floor. Accusations were flying thick and fast in regard to the use of money by lobbyists to defeat the bill. Senator Henry F. Ashurst of Arizona, “who was a cow-puncher before he was a Senator,” placed himself between the two angry solons.³¹ Once the heat of the debate was over, the two gentlemen settled back to their former relations of a passive, negligent attitude toward each other. A member of Wilson’s Cabinet penned “a very hearty and sincere word of congratulation and appreciation for the stalwart manner” in which Williams had defended the President in the debates. He was sure the people of Mississippi would appreciate it.³²

For years Bryan had been interested in international peace. In 1906, while on a world tour, he had spoken at a peace conference in London. During this speech the “Peerless Leader” introduced a resolution which contained the substance of the group of neutrality treaties which he was to instigate soon after becoming Secretary of State.³³ It is doubtful if many members of Washington officialdom agreed with the Secretary of State that his treaties would

³⁰ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 2 Sess., 10,223.

³¹ *New York Times*, June 2, 1914. The presiding officer of the Senate wrote that the Mississippi Senators “had no love” for each other. See Thomas R. Marshall, *Recollections of Thomas R. Marshall, A Hoosier Salad* (Indianapolis, 1925), 302.

³² Franklin K. Lane to Williams, June 12, 1914, in Williams Papers.

³³ William J. Bryan to *id.*, August 14, 1914, *ibid.*

create permanent international peace. They were willing, however, to go along with him, because it was thought that his proposals would be a step in that direction. The treaties were amended by the Foreign Relations Committee, reported to the Senate, and ratified. As a token of appreciation for the interest and labor Williams had exerted in the ratification, Bryan sent him a two-volume set of his speeches. The Secretary concluded his letter by stating, "you can understand with what satisfaction I contemplated the action of the Senate yesterday and how deeply I appreciate the support given to the treaties."³⁴ In his letter thanking Bryan, the Mississippian expressed a love of further civilizing the practices of warring nations. "Imprisonment for private debts having been declared barbarous and having ceased to exist everywhere," he wrote, "I feel it is time for the civilized world to declare that the bombardment of towns and helpless women and children for public debt ought to cease."³⁵

By August 5 all was not going well with the Foreign Relations Committee. It had fought over the Bryan treaties while Williams sought for speedy action. In a stormy session of the committee the Senator urged that the treaties and his bill for the purchase of foreign ships in American ports be reported. A short while after his defeat on the Ship-Purchase bill in the committee, Williams made a statement on the Senate floor and sent to the desk his resignation from the powerful committee. The message, though read by the clerk, was of such a personal nature that it was stricken from the official record. When the Vice-President ruled his procedure out of order, Williams appealed from the decision of the chair. The chair was sustained by all except Senator Williams; whereupon "the infuriated Mississippian sought the door and left the chamber."³⁶

³⁴ *Id.* to *id.*, August 14, 1914, *ibid.*

³⁵ Williams to Bryan, August 15, 1914, *ibid.*

³⁶ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 2 Sess., 13,434; *New York Times*, August 6, 1914.

Two days later Williams apologized to the Senate: "I was angered by this outbreak of senseless war, setting all Europe aflame, and feeling mad all over, down to the very bottom of my shoes, and somewhat sick and irritable, too, I lost my temper; and about the only excuse for it is voluntarily to mention the fact.

"What I did I intended to do deliberately and I intend to persist in it, because of the variance of opinion between a majority of the committee and myself as to the immediacy of the emergency that is resting upon us. That variance is so great that I can not serve upon the committee in justice to myself. But there was no sort of excuse at all for my going any further than merely asking to be relieved from duty on the committee. What I did seems to me justified, but my manner of doing it was not."³⁷ The chairman of the committee urged Williams not to resign because the Administration and the country needed his services. But if he would not any longer meet with the committee, "let there be no interruption of our friendship for there is really no cause whatever for that."³⁸ Williams insisted that he had no personal quarrel with any of the members of the committee, that they were all his friends. The point of difference was entirely a matter of party policy.³⁹ Bryan appeared sympathetic with Williams' position, and later made the Mississippian a gift of a sword hilt with the expressed hope that at some time this would be the only part of the sword that would be of any use to anyone. Williams agreed in this wish except for some sort of "international police force to compel the peace of the world."⁴⁰

For a number of years Williams had been a member of the executive committee of the American group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union for International Peace. Congressman Richard Bartholdt, also a member of the executive commit-

³⁷ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 2 Sess., 13434.

³⁸ William J. Stone to Williams, August 9, 1914, in Williams Papers.

³⁹ Williams to Bryan, September 12, 1914, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Id.* to *id.*, October 15, 1914, *ibid.*

tee, questioned Williams as to his opinion in regard to a meeting of the Union in Europe. This meeting would be held within the closing days of 1914 or in 1915. Williams thought it was thoroughly impractical to attempt to hold a meeting in Europe at that time. The war must be fought to the finish "before there can be any hope of any sort of mediation or other forms of common sense."⁴¹

With the beginning of the European war in July, 1914, American commerce was greatly impeded. As in the Napoleonic wars a century earlier, it seemed that the acts decreed by the various belligerents did more harm to the neutrals than to the countries at war. The United States, perhaps the most important neutral in both instances, received the greatest injury. Since the American merchant marine had been destroyed during the Civil War by privateers of the Confederacy, a new type of iron ship had become popular; but the United States had never really regained its pre-Civil War position. Several questions arose in 1914 and 1915 as to just what course should be pursued by the American government. Should the American merchant marine be subsidized? Efforts had been made several times since 1865 to establish such a subsidy.

Within a few days after the war began, Williams introduced a bill in the Senate for the purchase of foreign merchant vessels by the United States government.⁴² Many of these vessels were the property of the Central Powers and were to be added to our depleted merchant marine. As these ships were to be owned by the United States govern-

⁴¹ *Id.* to Richard Bartholdt, November 9, 1914, *ibid.* Williams had been a trustee of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace since its establishment in 1910. In November, 1913, he attended a confidential meeting of the board of trustees in New York City. Senator Root was the only other member of the Senate on the board. Among the twenty-seven members were some of the most famous men in America. After the business meeting the trustees attended a dinner in the palatial home of Mr. Carnegie. Williams retained his membership on this board of trustees until near the close of his public life. See Jackson *Daily News*, November 14, 1913.

⁴² *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 2 Sess., 13,220.

ment, the subsidy issue was not involved. Any profit which resulted from their operation would revert to the Federal Treasury.⁴³ Williams believed that Senators who had "died in the trenches" for earlier ship subsidy bills, were now opposing his bill for this very reason.⁴⁴ His plan offered America "the opportunity to re-establish its merchant marine, not by the futile, faulty methods of subsidy, but by meeting an opportunity."⁴⁵ This was a bill in which the South as a section was vitally interested. Most of the cotton crop, which in 1914 was unusually large, was at American ports awaiting shipment to foreign markets. The shipping companies which were continuing to carry cotton were doing so at greatly increased rates. It was only natural for the shippers and the insurance companies to take advantage of the unusual circumstances to exploit their customers; the rates had increased from 300 to 1,000 per cent. Williams declared this to be not only exploitation but piracy.⁴⁶ Every day that the American government delayed the enactment of a bill to secure ships for its merchant marine was costing American shippers something like a half million dollars in increased rates for their shipping. Root disagreed with the proposal and argued that belligerent nations would view with favor the enactment of such a law by the United States government, because the Allied nations had driven the enemy from the high seas and wanted their prey. Williams replied that any ship within the three-mile limit of American shores was not a subject of prey for any nation.

When Root said that the Declaration of London was not binding upon the United States, Williams gave two reasons why this statement was false. This nation had agreed to it even though no formal exchange of ratifications had taken place; we were morally bound to accept it. Russia, France, and England had declared that they would be bound by it.

⁴³ Williams to R. E. Lee, July 24, 1915, in Williams Papers.

⁴⁴ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 3 Sess., 3339.

⁴⁵ *Jackson Daily News*, August 9, 1914.

⁴⁶ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 3 Sess., 2220.

The captor's law was the law of war, subject only to the prize court after seizure.⁴⁷ Others thought that only German ships would be bought, whereas Williams believed that Austrian, Dutch, and Norwegian vessels would also be purchased.

It was publicly known that Wilson favored purchase of ships. Senator Vardaman in a press interview strongly opposed the President in this phase of his foreign policy, which he interpreted as pro-English.⁴⁸ The Mississippi press made much ado over this rift between the state's two Senators. Some Mississippi Representatives in the lower house sided with the junior Senator against Williams. Congressman Samuel A. Witherspoon of Meridian made it a point to answer the arguments given by Williams in defense of the bill. There were some attempts to persuade Williams to speak in various parts of the state on the Ship-Purchase bill; apparently Witherspoon gave his consent to debate on the question in the summer of 1915. Williams replied that he would not debate at all that summer merely for the sake of picnickers and excursionists, but that the following year, in his campaign for re-election, he would debate the issue with any and all of his opponents on the stump throughout the state.⁴⁹ This Ship-Purchase bill failed in the session that expired March 4, 1915, but Williams was determined to reintroduce a similar measure in the next session, which began in December.

William G. McAdoo was quoted in the press as being opposed to any form of ship-purchase act. Williams wrote to him and inquired if this were his opinion or if he had been misquoted. McAdoo replied by telegram on August 19 that such statements were absolutely false. He urged Williams to make corrections for him wherever the error appeared. The Secretary of the Treasury believed that "the only practical solution of the shipping problem is the ship-

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2220-21.

⁴⁸ *Washington Post*, January 10, 1915.

⁴⁹ *Jackson Daily News*, July 28, 1915.

ping bill proposed in the last session of Congress.”⁵⁰ Williams was in constant correspondence with the President during the vacation of 1915, and the latter advised Williams that he need have no fears “that any member of the administration will stand back of a subsidy proposition.”⁵¹ Their plans in regard to the action on the Ship-Purchase bill the following session were dovetailing. As filibusters had been the death knell of the bill in the previous session, Williams readily agreed with Wilson’s suggestion that some kind of restrictions should be placed upon debate in the Senate. The Mississippian was wholeheartedly in favor of a revision of the Senate rules of order so that some limitations could be inaugurated to prevent a small minority from obstructing the plans of the majority. The President was advised to remain temporarily silent in regard to the plans for re-introduction of the purchase bill at the next session. A special committee was to be appointed as soon as Congress met to propose and to secure changes in the rules of the Senate before the bill was presented.⁵² At the President’s request Williams canvassed public opinion in the Lower South on the measure⁵³ and wrote Wilson an optimistic letter expressing his conclusion in regard to the favorable attitude of the public.⁵⁴ After much debate in the first session of the Sixty-fourth Congress, a Ship-Purchase bill was finally enacted. An appropriation of \$50,000,000 was made for the building, leasing, or purchase of ships to be owned by the government.⁵⁵

Although Bryan had aided materially in the ratification of the Treaty of Paris in 1898, which provided for the retention of the Philippine Islands, it was recognized that the

⁵⁰ William G. McAdoo to Williams, August 19, 1915, in Williams Papers.

⁵¹ Wilson to *id.*, August 17, 1915, *ibid.*

⁵² Williams to Wilson, August 23, 1915, *ibid.*

⁵³ Wilson to Williams, August 17, 1915, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Williams to Wilson, August 25, 1915, *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Sullivan, *Our Times*, V, 624.

policy of the Democratic party had been, since that time, to grant the islands independence at the first opportunity that presented itself. Once the Democrats were in power, and after the President had made much progress in his domestic reforms, Williams and others began to urge reforms in America's policy toward these insular possessions.

Williams agreed that the average Filipino would be better off materially under American control than he would under the control of his own government. His purpose, in endeavoring to get rid of these islands, was not one of aiding them, but of benefiting the United States. All people, in the opinion of the Senator, had the right of self-government, a God-given right which carried with it the right of self-misgovernment. It would be poison to our body politic to make citizens of these people. The United States had a perfect right, stated Williams, to say to any people anywhere, "govern yourselves or go to the devil." We had adopted these people against their will and without any moral right whatsoever.⁵⁶ Williams' papers in the Library of Congress contain a very interesting document in regard to our relations with the islands. It is a lengthy paper from the American Bankers Association, written by its Committee on Federal Legislation. From this source it appears that there were about \$17,000,000 worth of bonds sold to bankers of this country paying interest at the rate of 4 per cent per annum. Both principal and interest were payable at the Treasury of the United States. Legally the United States government was not pledged to guarantee the payment of these bonds; the transaction, however, was negotiated under the auspices of the United States government during a Republican Administration. These bonds issued by the government of the Philippine Islands were exempt from taxation by the governments of the United States and the Philippine Islands or by any judicial or municipal subdivision of the islands or by the District of Columbia. The argument of the Ameri-

⁵⁶ Williams to Frank Roberson, December 13, 1915, in Williams Papers.

can bankers was very forceful if the premise was accepted that the American government should be willing to guarantee loans from its wealthy citizens to invest at a good rate of interest in tax-free securities. It necessarily followed that all taxpayers must pay the burden of increased taxes to support a navy that would be strong enough to prevent other nations from encroaching on our imperial domain.

Williams began to clamor for the complete independence of these people. God allowed us the privilege of self-government; "why should we not allow it to other races of other colors, alien and unassimilable?"⁵⁷ If Japan ever became our enemy, Williams could wish her no greater curse than that of acquiring the guardianship of the Philippine Islands.⁵⁸ He believed she would perform such a responsibility better than the United States. If independence were to be given, sovereignty should also be included, not with a string that would every year bring about friction.⁵⁹ The McKinley religious plea had a rebirth in a speech by Senator Thomas Sterling of South Dakota. As a member of the House Williams had been familiar with this plea in its infancy. In a certain sense, Williams admitted, each of us is his brother's keeper, but he had "never seen or heard any authority from God or man for the proposition that I was my brother's keeper to keep him with a club."⁶⁰

It was not until August, 1916, that the American government finally changed its laws for governing the Philippine Islands. The bill enacted did away with the Philippine commission, and greatly increased the electorate of the islands. The office of Governor General was retained, and that of Vice-Governor General added. In an election to be held the following month, the Filipinos were to elect their first Senate. The functions of the native legislature, however, were limited. Thus, the President of the United States still held the reins over the islands.⁶¹

⁵⁷ *Id.* to W. A. Hays, January 25, 1916, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ *New York Times*, January 9, 1916.

⁵⁹ *Cong. Record*, 64 Cong., 1 Sess., 2064.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 723.

⁶¹ *New York Times*, August 17, 1916.

Chapter XII

THE DRIFT TOWARD WAR

ALTHOUGH many of the people of the United States in 1914 knew practically nothing of the conditions that then existed in Europe, a considerable group was deeply concerned over the situation there. This latter element had been awakened by alleged acts of barbarism. Early in 1914 Williams revealed his opinion in regard to the situation in Germany.¹ As a student in one of the leading German universities he had become familiar with the German people, with their history, with their government, with their literature—in short, with their civilization. He loved the German people generally, but his disgust for the German military caste dated back to the middle 1870's, when he had come in contact with the system forced upon the people by the bureaucratic military machine. Williams had been "expecting for fifteen or sixteen years a regular revolution from the bottom of Germany revolting against militarism and the Junker class." Because of the stupidity of this group he did not believe anyone in the world could stand its insolence.

Williams listed among his friends many German-Americans. For thirty years or more he had gone on an annual outing—an all-day affair it was—with several German-American families in his home county. These occasions he had always anticipated with great joy. In early national political campaigns he had been enthusiastically received in parts of the United States in which the German element was unusually strong. Soon after the World War began, a

¹ Williams to David Compton, March 7, 1914, in Williams Papers.

former German who had become an American citizen, wrote to Williams urging him to promote and maintain an absolute neutrality between the American government and both groups of belligerents in Europe. The Senator promised this constituent that he would do everything within his power "to keep the scales of neutrality perfectly level. . . . The right thing for us to do . . . is to remember that we are Americans and neither Englishmen nor Germans."²

Several days before Williams wrote of his intentions to be neutral, President Wilson, sitting by the bedside of his dying wife, had written a brief note to the belligerent nations offering the "good offices" of the United States for mediation.³ This act met with the "heartly approval" of the Secretary of State, members of the foreign diplomatic corps, and Congress. Less than two weeks later the President sat alone on the observation car of the train which was bringing him back to Washington from Rome, Georgia, where he had attended the funeral of his wife. It was during these hours, his official biographer believed, that an appeal was penned to the American people insisting that "the United States must be neutral in fact as well as in name."⁴

Before the close of 1914 Williams was expressing himself privately in an unneutral manner in regard to the warring nations. He believed that "There was always a streak of insanity in that Royal House of Hohenzollern."⁵ The Mississippian had advanced much further in his expressed antagonism toward the Central Powers. In January, 1915, he said, "I do not believe ["the Prussian-Junkerthum"] will rest satisfied until it has asserted Germanic supremacy throughout the world. Germany will not be satisfied with continental supremacy alone."⁶ After Germany's acquisition of

² *Id.* to E. R. Von Seutter, August 22, 1914, *ibid.*

³ Baker, *Woodrow Wilson*, V, 8.

⁴ Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd (eds.), *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (New York, 1925-1926), III, 157-59.

⁵ Williams to O. Hubbard, December 16, 1914; *id.* to Miss Claude McQuiston, November 24, 1914, in Williams Papers.

⁶ *Id.* to John Ross, January 5, 1915, *ibid.* It is interesting to note that

European dominance she would seek to acquire the supremacy of the seas. The United States, in order to combat such expansion, would have to build the largest navy the world had ever seen. Germany probably would seek to destroy the United States by trifling with the states of South America, thus necessitating our invoking the Monroe Doctrine. Step by step, the letter revealed the workings of the Senator's mind.

That Williams' general attitude favored the Allied nations may be safely concluded. He wrote to Charles de Lesseps of Paris, France, a son of the famous engineer of Panama Canal fame: "I can conceive of nothing which would be more beautiful in spirit than a union of France and America and of de Lesseps and Goethals by a monument erected to your father by the United States upon a site chosen by Colonel Goethals." ⁷ Williams' ancestors had emigrated from Wales, and he always had a tender spot in his heart for this part of the British Isles. He loved the English; believed that English and Americans were the only guardians of international peace. There can be no doubt that in the advocacy of an absolutely strict neutrality toward the two groups of warring nations, Williams was urging something foreign to his personal feelings.⁸

From the beginning of the war the Allied nations as well as Germany began breaking the rules of international law and precedents. The continuous voyage principle for which the United States had contended so persistently during the War Between the States was invoked by the English. Eng-

Williams clearly anticipated the imperialistic objectives of the rising empire of the Far East. He refuted the idea that Japan was seeking to get control of the Philippine Islands. She had very little if any desire for this territory. Japan would not have these islands, with the exception of Luzon, "even if we threw them at her head." She was looking westward, not southward. Expansion in China was her goal. Her objectives in this area were to maintain a "commercial supremacy and later on political supremacy in Manchuria."

⁷ *Id.* to Charles de Lesseps, May 25, 1914, *ibid.*

⁸ Williams as an individual reflected the national pattern as drawn by Tansill, *America Goes to War*, 3-15.

land now seized American vessels bound for Holland and other neutral states. The reason given by the British government was that the goods were destined ultimately to reach the enemy. The American government could not declare war against the British for such seizures when in reality the American government had supported the continuous voyage as a part of international law. It was "rather unfortunate for us," Williams contended, "that the precedent set by the United States . . . a precedent which I never did believe was founded on right or justice," confronted the United States again.⁹ Serious difficulty with England was averted more by the acts of the German submarines than by anything else.

In an endeavor to stop the commerce of the Allies, German submarines were sinking vessels, on some of which were people of neutral countries. The United States as the largest neutral nation naturally suffered the loss of some of its citizens. On May 7, 1915, the *Lusitania*, a British-owned, and therefore a belligerent, vessel, sank some twenty minutes after it had been torpedoed off the coast of Ireland. Of the 1,257 passengers on board, 1,195 were lost, including 128 Americans, of whom 37 were women and 21 children.

In a press interview in Jackson, Mississippi, Williams discussed the *Lusitania* tragedy very freely. The sinking of the ship was atrocious, and the United States government should exert itself in no uncertain manner. The President should order mobilization of the American fleet and demand "heavy indemnity and ample apology" from the Germans. Williams was accused of attempting to turn the *Lusitania* incident into political advantage for himself. He was reported as having said that "if Congress had passed the Ship Purchase Bill there would have been no *Lusitania* incident," since this ship would have been sailing under the American flag as an American-owned vessel. In answering the adverse criticism, Williams stated that he did not say

⁹ Williams to W. W. Ellis, Jr., July 14, 1915, in Williams Papers.

what was in the reported interview, and demanded that he be quoted correctly when being criticized. The *Columbus Dispatch* published Williams' lengthy reply to its editorial and added that the paper did not often criticize the Senator, that his denial of the interview removed him from the realm of criticism, and that the paper was glad to give space to the denial.¹⁰

Williams' correspondence indicates what the Senator advocated following the *Lusitania* incident. He thought the United States should sever diplomatic relations with Germany and notify her that merchant ships in our ports would not be protected. Congress need not be called into session because he thought the President could handle the situation and could be trusted to do only those things that the Constitution sanctioned. He wanted the United States to stop speaking "to the Kaiser until he begins to behave himself."¹¹ Senator Williams also declared that American citizens had a perfect right to travel on unarmed belligerent merchant ships except those going to Germany and Austria. No warring power had the right, he stated, without warning and without giving time for women and children to get into lifeboats, to sink a ship and send its passengers into eternity.¹²

It was almost impossible for a submarine to meet Williams' requirements. Any submarine that came above the surface of the water to notify passengers on board a vessel that their ship was about to be torpedoed endangered itself in at least two ways. It would be practically a defenseless target for any gun which the ship might carry. It would also be in danger of being rammed by the other vessel. Even if neither of these things happened, the submarine could not

¹⁰ *Columbus (Miss.) Dispatch*, May 16, June 6, 1915; *Kosciusko (Miss.) Herald*, May 21, 1915; *Jackson Daily News*, June 13, 1915. The Senator was correct in his contention because he had been reported incorrectly.

¹¹ Williams to Robert E. Reed, May 19, 1915; *id.* to *id.*, May 26, 1915; *id.* to Reverend N. G. Augustus, May 26, 1915; *id.* to Wilson, May 19, 1915, in Williams Papers.

¹² *Id.* to J. L. Crawford, May 22, 1915, *ibid.*

possibly have fulfilled the Senator's conditions by saving the passengers and crew from the *Lusitania*. Count Johann von Bernstorff, the Ambassador from Germany to the United States, had warned through the New York newspapers that as the vessel was owned by a belligerent and carried large amounts of ammunition, it would probably be torpedoed. Placards were printed and placed in conspicuous places around the wharves in New York City warning Americans that they traveled aboard the vessel at the risk of their lives. Williams did not believe, however, that the Germans under any consideration had a sound case. He based his contentions on recognized international law, which had been established before the existence of the submarine.¹³

Williams, although he did not entirely agree with the policies of the President, thought that he ought not to indulge in open criticism "to any great extent." He did not want to hamper the Administration or shackle his own freedom of action. His motto was "to meet events as events may arise," and he preferred trusting the President rather than Congress for a sane policy. In writing to a constituent, he declared that it was "premature to be filing application for any position in connection with our military movements against Germany."¹⁴ He believed that if Congress had been in session when the *Lusitania* was sunk, a declaration of war would have been forthcoming immediately.¹⁵

Former President Roosevelt wrote in the *Outlook*, a few weeks after the beginning of the European war, that he favored the declared policy of neutrality, but sometime before the *Lusitania* disaster, the former Rough Rider had estranged himself from the note-writing policy of the White House. After the sinking of this ship, he repeatedly clam-

¹³ Wayne C. Williams, *William Jennings Bryan* (New York, 1936), 381. Bryan and others had urged for years that Americans be permitted to travel under such conditions only at their own risk. Twenty years later America enacted in a national neutrality act the points advocated by the "Peerless Leader."

¹⁴ Williams to W. A. Everman, May 26, 1915, in Williams Papers.

¹⁵ *Id.* to N. G. Augustus, May 26, 1915, *ibid.*

ored for immediate action. Writing to a friend in Pennsylvania, Williams characterized these utterances in this way: "I was reading a good book the other day in which one of the characters turned to a barking puppy and stated, 'down! down! you animated disturbance!' The phrase 'animated disturbance' is very good in re Theodore Roosevelt." ¹⁶

William Jennings Bryan, long known as an idealistic advocate of peace, could not follow the President in the change of policy caused by the sinking of the *Lusitania*. After several unsuccessful attempts to secure either a softening of the President's note to Germany ¹⁷ or the drafting of a note to England, the Secretary of State, on June 8, 1915, tendered his resignation. There was a touch of pathos in the last meeting of the great crusading Democrat with the Cabinet, his last official call upon the President, and the meeting with several other fellow Cabinet members as his guests at luncheon. It was a great shock to the people of the country when they read the press headlines that the "plain man of the prairie" had voluntarily relinquished his official position as Secretary of State. The *New York Times* wired a request to many of the leading statesmen for their opinion of Bryan's exit. From Williams at Yazoo City came this reply: "I do not see how it can or ought to have any bearing upon the question at issue between the United States and Germany." ¹⁸ Bryan's step was not a great surprise to the Senators who were members of the Foreign Relations Committee, because they were acquainted with the differences of opinion on foreign relations between the White House and the head of the State Department. ¹⁹

Williams wrote a friend that he did not see how it was possible for Bryan to sign two earlier notes to Germany if

¹⁶ *Id.* to William L. Allen, May 21, 1915, *ibid.*

¹⁷ Williams stated on June 2: "We must have guarantees against the repetition of instances such as that of the *Lusitania*." *New York Times*, June 2, 1915.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, June 9, 1915.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* An excellent account of the background of Bryan's resignation may be found in Tansill, *America Goes to War*, 266-339.

he could not sign the third one. Although he declared his opinion unfit for publication, he devoted a paragraph to it: "Bryan has every kind of sense except common sense. Sometimes he seems to be thoroughly devoid of that. He seems to think entirely in a subjective and seldom ever in an objective light. . . . This is the reason why, as I stated above, he is incapable of receiving a suggestion. The minute you begin talking to him, you will see that he is thinking about what he is going to say when you are through. . . . Bryan did the wrong thing in the wrong way at the wrong time." ²⁰

Robert Lansing, who had been a consultant of the Department of State, was named to the Secretaryship a short while after the vacancy occurred. For some time Wilson "had leaned more and more upon Mr. Lansing for advice and by the latter part of May, 1915, there were very few suggestions of Secretary Bryan that met with Presidential approval." ²¹ Lansing was more conservative and, incidentally, pro-English. It was thought that he would not "try to tread out new paths or . . . leave old land marks without what the darkies call 'mighty good' reason for it." ²²

On July 14 Williams admitted that he had changed from his long-established position in regard to preparedness for the United States. His lifetime belief in disarmament had been very simply illustrated on the floor of the Senate in 1912, when he spoke of the arbitration treaties:

"Soon after I went back home from the University of Virginia, I met a fellow who had killed about five men and who always went armed. I said to him one night, 'Jim, why do you not put that pistol up?' 'Well,' he said, 'John, I carry this pistol all the time so as to keep the peace. Nothing keeps a fellow out of so many rows as everybody knowing that he has got a pistol in his hip pocket.' It did not keep

²⁰ Williams to N. G. Augustus, June 25, 1915, in Williams Papers.

²¹ Tansill, *America Goes to War*, 223.

²² Williams to Robert Lansing, July 10, 1915, in Williams Papers.

him out of them, for finally he was shot. Those who live by the pistol die by it.”²³

Many times Williams had stressed the principle laid down in this simple illustration and declared that it would be a wise policy for the United States. He was now converted to the Rooseveltian idea of a navy strong in torpedo destroyers, in submarines, in cruisers, and in dreadnoughts. His views until a few months earlier had been the opposite, because he thought that “the world was more civilized than it had proved itself to be.”²⁴ The recent convert asked for a place on the Naval Affairs Committee, but no vacancy occurred.

National defense was discussed daily in many of the papers. Wilson had stated in his annual message of December 8, 1914, that, although the national defense was sufficient for times of peace, “we are not unmindful of the great responsibility resting upon us.”²⁵ The President had changed his mind somewhat in regard to the sufficiency of American armament. Yet another alteration of President Wilson’s mind was evidenced in his note to Germany on July 23. The *New York Times*, the *New York World*, the *Chicago Examiner*, and the *Atlanta Georgian* wired Williams asking that he express his opinion of the latest note, and his views in regard to national armament and the arbitration of neutral rights.

Like every good American, the Senator hoped that Germany would modify her “totally unacceptable and inadmissible position.” Three eight-hour shifts should be inaugurated at once in the construction of our navy. Convoys of armed battleships and cruisers would probably be needed to accompany American vessels across the Atlantic. Safety of passengers before the destruction of ships must be insisted upon; if submarines could not guarantee this safety,

²³ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 2 Sess., 2833.

²⁴ Williams to Wilson, July 14, 1915, in Williams Papers.

²⁵ Baker and Dodd (eds.), *Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, III, 215-28.

it did not prove that a guarantee was not a right, it proved only that submarines would have to be used for some other purpose.²⁶ "We can never concede the right of a belligerent on its own motion to alter the rules of international law so far as they affect neutrals upon the pretext or ground that military advantage demands the alteration."²⁷ We could well afford to agree with Germany's proposal to arbitrate neutral rights, provided Germany promised that, during the interval when these rights were arbitrated, objectionable acts would cease. The principle for which the President was contending had been "recognized and admitted ever since the Barbary Pirates unsuccessfully contended for the opposite principles." An unarmed merchant vessel would lose this guaranteed right of protection under the position assumed by Germany.²⁸ These views were expressed by a large majority of the members of Congress.

In contrast to his position concerning the navy, Williams objected to an increase in the army, whereas a majority of his Congressional colleagues favored greatly increasing the army as well as the navy.²⁹ A letter containing Williams' views was mailed from Cedar Grove on July 24 to the White House. The President replied a week later that Williams' attitude toward the Administration's foreign policy gave him "not only deep gratification but sincere pride."³⁰ To his constituents, Williams wrote that men and women did not need to discuss the question of increasing defense, they needed to "talk peace, think peace, pray for peace, and act for peace."³¹

Senator Vardaman contended that there was no danger at all that any European nation would attack the United States, that the danger was as remote as that of "the mice in my office attacking me." If it so happened in the future that this country needed to build a great navy, we had the natural

²⁶ New York *Times*, July 25, 1915.

²⁷ New York *World*, July 24, 1915.

²⁸ Chicago *Examiner*, July 24, 1915.

²⁹ New York *Times*, July 25, 1915.

³⁰ Wilson to Williams, July 30, 1915, in Williams Papers.

³¹ Williams to C. W. Parker, September 21, 1915, *ibid.*

resources, the labor, and the capital to construct a navy faster than any of the European countries. Both groups of belligerents would be in a state of devastation at the conclusion of the war. This would eliminate any danger for the United States.³² It is interesting to note that this was the position Williams had held until two months earlier. In the future the senior Senator many times denounced his junior colleague. Of course, Williams was certain that Germany's actions necessitated such a changed attitude and the majority of the people of the United States supported him in this change. Vardaman stood with the few who were "willing to be unpopular for conscience sake."³³ His anti-preparedness and antiwar attitude were in time to lead to his defeat for re-election to the United States Senate by Representative Pat Harrison and thus to his retirement from active politics.

On October 28 Williams wrote the President a thirteen-page typewritten letter in which he discussed at length his recent conversion to the doctrine of armed neutrality. The state of preparedness which he demanded must be far bigger than "any which we have thus far had." It was to be based solely upon the assumption of the "possible necessity of entering a defensive war, when, of course offensive war would become a part of our defense."

Senator Williams contended that our navy must be superior to that of the German Empire. It must be built while Germany was at war. Had not Themistocles advised the ancient Greeks that their best fortification was wooden walls? The liberty of a people had never been threatened by an extensive navy. It would be much better to have a navy capable of meeting the enemy upon the seas than to permit him to land on our shores with a huge army. Then when the Germans were able to overrun countries and continents and "establish undisputed areas of despotism," the seas

³² Washington *Evening Star*, September 25, 1915.

³³ John Temple Graves in New York *American*, October 30, 1917.

would always remain free. Williams expressed his hope of being placed upon the Naval Affairs Committee of the Senate at the next session. If successful, he would support the Administration in every effort to make the American navy adequate for all purposes of defensive warfare, which included "among other things, the ability to make offensive war to the defeat of the enemy's force upon the high seas."

Williams did not doubt that the President had been a convert to the need of a strong land force as well as sea force. To this the Mississippian could not agree for several reasons. It would be a waste to deflect money from the navy and other fields of need into the army. Armies menaced free institutions. If the navy should be attacked, it could retard the landing of a foreign army on our shores long enough to enable us to raise, equip, and train an army capable of combating any such foreign force. Therefore, it was worse than absurd to raise an army in advance. It was a waste of time, effort, and money. The Allies, with all of their sea forces, dared not land an army upon the German coast. The only necessity of an increase in our land forces would be to take care of any crisis that might arise on the Mexican border. "I think," the Senator concluded, "it is a part of my duty to discuss candidly with my political chief before hand and not after, all critical questions of public policy."³⁴ The President honored the "principle of advice before the event and not after." He found himself in accord with the Senator on principles laid down in the lengthy letter, and hoped that they could agree upon the method of realization.³⁵

Two days after his letter of October 28 to the President, Williams wrote the Secretary of the Navy. He wanted Daniels to furnish him, "confidentially," with as much information as he could on the strength of the German navy. The comparative strength of the United States in the various categories was also requested.³⁶ Once converted to the

³⁴ Williams to Wilson, October 28, 1915, in Williams Papers.

³⁵ Wilson to Williams, November 8, 1915, *ibid.*

³⁶ Williams to Josephus Daniels, October 30, 1915, *ibid.*

idea of preparedness, Williams clung to it with bulldog tenacity. In his voluminous correspondence, in a few articles, and in many speeches, he advocated, upon almost every occasion, the doctrine of a large navy. In a Christmas message Williams wrote that "it is part of His counsel to overcome . . . [the Germans]; if necessary to put ourselves in a position where at any rate if the necessity should arise we would have a reasonable hope of preventing anybody from overcoming us." Christ had stated, "I come not to bring peace into the world but a sword." Make the children happy as usual, but do not let the grown people forget the un-Christian conditions throughout the world. He suggested that a resolution be adopted that "each do his part in seeking to advance thought and sentiment of the world to a stage where the barbarous actualities and possibilities of today may become psychologically and ethically the impossibilities of . . . a better day."³⁷

By no means were all of the people of Mississippi conscientiously able to follow Williams in his conversion to the preparedness program. Many complaining constituents criticized him for his stand. One person believed that "the boys back home" were "first, last and all the time against the President's scheme of preparedness or any other [program] that will increase the taxes."³⁸ Another constituent stated: "I want to register with you my protest against the scheme of preparedness. . . . I think it would not fall short of a calamity if it should prevail."³⁹ From a third constituent came another objection: the Democratic party was certain of defeat in the election of 1916 as a result of the necessary taxes which would result from preparedness.⁴⁰ A fourth wrote as follows:

"I c there is very important bill to came up before you in this congress and i want to ask a favor of you i want you to

³⁷ "A Christmas Message," in *Macon (Miss.) Beacon*, December 24, 1913.

³⁸ J. D. Marshall to Williams, January 13, 1916, in Williams Papers.

³⁹ C. Z. Berryhill to *id.*, January 13, 1916, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ W. B. Kenabrew to *id.*, January 13, 1916, *ibid.*

use your vote and influence to defeat it the preparedness bill i thank it would be just awful for such a bill to be made a law. hope you will consider my plea i remain ”⁴¹

The Senator answered all these letters in the same vein. “The boys back home” were mistaken in their idea that the majority of the people were not for preparedness. The rank and file of the Democratic party and the American people were with the President. Williams knew that the Democratic party would arouse “a great deal of objection” when new taxes were levied, but he felt that there were times when the welfare of the nation must be placed above party interests. He could not continue to use his influence to promote unpreparedness when a great “semi-barbarous nation” was seeking world dominance. There comes a time in the life of a nation as in the life of an individual when the higher duty is to take the sword of justice. That hour had come in the life of the United States. As the son of a Confederate soldier, Williams believed in fighting for one’s rights. Like his father, he did not believe in fighting for aggression but only for defense. Similarly, he believed it his duty as a public servant to tell those constituents who disagreed with him that he was going to act in direct opposition to their pleas. If Mississippians did not agree with him, which, obviously, some did not, they could vote against him and for someone who had the convictions which they advocated. These letters were written in January, 1916, the year of Williams’ re-election—an unusual manifestation of courage for a man in public office.⁴²

On January 6 Williams spoke on Senate Resolution 42, which contained a request that the President answer some questions on the Mexican situation for the information of the Senate. Before he had closed the speech, he had left the Mexican problem and stated very succinctly his idea of the

⁴¹ S. C. Stapleton to *id.*, January 15, 1916, *ibid.*

⁴² Williams to J. D. Marshall, January 17, 1916; *id.* to W. B. Kenabrew, January 17, 1916; *id.* to C. Z. Berryhill, January 19, 1916; *id.* to S. C. Stapleton, January 19, 1916, *ibid.*

diplomatic situation as a whole so far as the United States was concerned: "I am sorry for one that Congress had to meet right now. I think the management of our diplomatic affairs would have been more wisely handled by a man long visioned and deep visioned and tender visioned than they are apt to be when they are made a game of battledore and shuttlecock on the floor of these two Houses, even when I am one who is forced by others to join in playing the game." ⁴³

This was certainly a clear and true analysis of the game of diplomacy as it was then played by the United States. The Senator did not fail to urge a great increase in our preparedness. He "seemed to have no doubt as to Germany's ultimate triumph" unless the United States aided the Allies. This belief was used to substantiate his arguments for the necessity of the United States to maintain the right to sell arms to belligerents. The *New York Times* devoted a column on the first page to a review of the Senator's speech.⁴⁴ "Such wisdom . . . is not common in our Senate," wrote an admirer.⁴⁵ The President immediately sent his note of appreciation for the remarks which the Mississippian had uttered in supporting his policies. "That was a splendid speech you delivered yesterday." Wilson was "particularly grateful" for the "generous references" made to himself.⁴⁶

On January 20 Williams delivered his second speech of the Sixty-fourth Congress on preparedness. The Senate was discussing at the time the seizure of southern cotton and American foodstuffs upon the high seas by Great Britain. Not a single member of the Confederacy "from Jeff Davis down" had ever begged for mercy because of the blockade established by the Federal government, the Senator stated. War was war, it was "not a system of caressing." Williams did not want the southern states, because of the attitude of

⁴³ *Cong. Record*, 64 Cong., 1 Sess., 602.

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, January 7, 1916.

⁴⁵ Earnest J. Hughes to Williams, January 19, 1916, in Williams Papers.

⁴⁶ Wilson to *id.*, January 7, 1916, *ibid.*

Vardaman, Hoke Smith, Thomas W. Hardwick, and others, to be placed in the position of saying to the world that there was no difference between loss of property and loss of lives. Although he was not sure, he believed he would take the same position if a Republican were in the White House instead of a Democrat. The speaker was informed by Gilbert M. Hitchcock that Great Britain had seized, carried off, and opened sixty-three bags of United States mail which was addressed to neutral countries. Williams, amid laughter in the galleries, stated that he would not declare war and have a lot of people killed because someone interfered with his mail. He was not going to shed "one drop of American or Canadian blood . . . on account of any foolish action of British censors." Such violations of international law were trifles. He would protest these violations and later, when the violators were more at ease, trust the property losses to a righteous settlement before an international tribunal. "The only thing that I would shed blood about is blood."

Some of the Senators who had advocated aggressiveness toward Mexico were now favoring leniency toward Germany. The only reason they wanted to show a different policy as between Germany and Mexico, Williams believed, was because "Mexico is little enough to be kicked and Germany is too large to be kicked." ⁴⁷

Telegrams and letters poured into Williams' office as a result of this speech. An analysis of them shows that geographically they were chiefly from the northeastern states and from Mississippi. A very few of them came from the Midwest and the Southwest. This seemed to indicate that the Northeast, chiefly industrial and commercial, was drifting toward war. The West, more agricultural, was not ready to embark on such a voyage in order to protect the commerce in which it was not engaged.

⁴⁷ *Cong. Record*, 64 Cong., 1 Sess., 1306-1309. English injuries to the United States were commercial and were often lessened by offers of purchase, whereas German injuries resulting in loss of life could not be arbitrated. See Paxson, *Pre-War Years, 1913-1917*, p. 216.

"Thank God for the noble sentiments you expressed yesterday in the Senate. All sensible people agree with you," read one of the telegrams.⁴⁸ A midwestern Republican wired congratulations and asked "who stands if liberty falls?"⁴⁹ Of the numerous letters received, none, perhaps, was enjoyed more than one received from former President Roosevelt:

"As you say, you and I have not been politically in accord but I believe that we are in accord on fundamental questions involving national self-respect, and, as an American, I wish to thank you for your recent speech. I wish there were more of your kind in the Senate."⁵⁰

The New York *Times* characterized Williams' speech as the "feature of the day."⁵¹ Although Democrats and Republicans were attacked in the speech, only the Democrats replied. Editorially, Adolph S. Ochs called it "an American speech," and declared that Williams had "brought the healthful air of common sense into a chamber surcharged with demagoguery."⁵²

By January 21, 1916, Williams had enlarged his plan for preparedness to include the army and wrote the President to this effect. Although he still held to his earlier policy of placing greater faith in the navy,⁵³ he now wrote that many large guns and an increased personnel should be added to the army, so that in case of war there would be equipment and officers to supply and train recruits.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, America must not prepare to whip the world, for every dollar that we spent on the navy and army would be subtracted from something more worth-while.⁵⁵

On March 2 Williams, just up from a severe case of in-

⁴⁸ Henry Hentz to Williams, January 21, 1916, in Williams Papers.

⁴⁹ E. J. Barrows to *id.*, January 21, 1916, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Theodore Roosevelt to *id.*, January 24, 1916, *ibid.*

⁵¹ New York *Times*, January 21, 1916.

⁵² *Ibid.*, January 23, 1916.

⁵³ Williams to Wilson, January 21, 1916, in Williams Papers.

⁵⁴ *Id.* to E. A. Butler, January 21, 1916, *ibid.*

⁵⁵ John Sharp Williams, "The Real Preparedness," in Jackson *Daily News*, February 25, 1916.

fluenza, laboriously walked into the Senate chamber. He was just in time to hear Senator Stone of Missouri criticize the policies of the President. When Stone had finished his tirade against the Administration, Williams pulled himself up by the top of his desk and began. He was never less disposed nor less physically able to make a speech than he was at that moment. A reporter noted that Williams spoke "on the spur of the moment" and looked far from well.⁵⁶ "There are times in the history of all peoples . . . when men come to the parting of the ways, . . . when each man must stand for that which he thinks to be true and right and just and brave and patriotic." The question before the American people was: Shall we exclaim "America first" or shall we sing "Deutschland über Alles"? The speaker had the highest contempt for any politician who might seek to straddle or evade the issue. Senators had nagged the President until at last he had picked up the gauntlet. Williams urged his colleagues to permit the initiative in the foreign relations to remain where it had been since the birth of our government. The actions of a very few members had caused Germany several times to take renewed faith in the belief that America's foreign policy was not to be taken too seriously. Such actions might possibly lead a foreign nation into war "with the United States." The Senator inserted at the close of his remarks an article which the New York *World* had published on March 1, but which had earlier appeared in *Vossische Zeitung* of Berlin. This article, entitled "How the Poison Works," commented on the lack of unity in the United States on the foreign policy of the Administration.⁵⁷

Parts of this speech were misunderstood, but Williams, in his correspondence, continued to answer criticisms against the Administration's policies. When a New Yorker accused him of wanting to exterminate the Germans in the United States, the Mississippian became angry. Such a sug-

⁵⁶ New York Times, March 3, 1916.

⁵⁷ Cong. Record, 64 Cong., 1 Sess., 3407-3409.

gestion argued either that the accuser was "a fool, or that you think I am, I do not know which. Settle that question yourself."⁵⁸ A letter, signed by nine men "and others" from Pittsburgh, bitterly opposed the United States' going into a war with Germany. They were of the opinion that the Administration had not been neutral since the beginning of the war. Bankers and other vested interests, they thought, were exerting pressure to force the United States into the European war.⁵⁹ "An absolute falsehood" was Williams' reply to the opinion that the United States government had not been neutral toward all belligerents. It was well that these men and others were expressing themselves in letters and publicly in the press. If the war came and the government wanted to know the motives of such people, it would at least have some idea of their lack of patriotism.⁶⁰ Williams thought it necessary to answer criticisms from some of his constituents who were objecting to the adoption of any resolution which might possibly lead to war. He discussed at great length some of the problems connected with preparedness in an effort to enlighten his constituents on the problems of foreign affairs and to bring those holding opposite views around to his way of thinking. He always upheld the actions of the President, contending that "The only way to keep American freedom is to be prepared to defend it."⁶¹

On March 24, 1916, a German submarine torpedoed and sank a French channel steamer, the *Sussex*. American lives were lost. The act was committed without warning and without provision for the safety of the passengers. Wilson immediately adopted a sterner attitude in his notes to the

⁵⁸ Williams to D. F. Penington, March 6, 1916, in Williams Papers.

⁵⁹ Charles S. Smith and others to Williams, April 20, 1916, *ibid*.

⁶⁰ Williams to Charles S. Smith and others, April 28, 1916, *ibid*. Since that time much has come to light to prove the fallacy of Williams' conclusions. For a scholarly treatise see Tansill, *America Goes to War*, 32-135.

⁶¹ *Id.* to Joe P. Wilson, April 29, 1916; *id.* to Phil Christman, April 22, 1916, *ibid*.

German government. In order to secure the assurance that Congress would follow his leadership, he appeared before a joint session of Congress and read his note—an ultimatum—to the German government. He was now making threats to Germany in regard to submarine warfare. The galleries and niches of the House chamber were filled to overflowing. The message, a very brief one, was received enthusiastically by the audience. The press was favorable, but did not seem to be so enthusiastic as Congress.

The German government soon retracted the position that it had assumed when it had sunk the *Sussex* without warning. On May 4 Bernstorff handed Lansing a note of capitulation. Germany would not sink any more vessels of commerce until she had first provided for the safety of the passengers. The loophole in this pledge was the statement that if the United States government did not enforce the rules of international law upon England, Germany would reserve the right to decide how to act. Lansing protested the reservation, but note writing was discontinued until after the presidential election.

Although the protests of the State Department against the atrocities of the German submarines had been deferred until after the election, Williams did not cease his pleas for national armament. He advocated military training in every university in the United States. Such a plea was founded on Democratic doctrine, he stated, as Thomas Jefferson had advocated military science for the University of Virginia.⁶²

On June 26 a bill was reported before the Senate for financial aid to families of members of the National Guard who had been mustered into service for duty on the Mexican border. In remarks on this resolution, Williams gave an inkling of a very important stand that he was later to emphasize. He condemned the proposition of evaluating patriotism in terms of pecuniary compensation. He did not

⁶² *Cong. Record*, 64 Cong., 1 Sess., 5367, 6218-19.

believe that a man could be a patriot and expect material compensation for his patriotism any "more than a boy can eat his cake and keep his cake both at the same time." It was very unusual, in his opinion, for the United States, when faced with war, to stop to provide full compensation to all those who were to bear muskets. The enemy must be met first. In the true sense of the word, compensation could never be given for patriotism. How could a man be repaid for the loss of time and youth, for suffering which he must endure, for the sacrifices of his widow and children, for the retarding of the education of his children, and for the lack of money which he might have earned in private life? There was no such thing as compensation in these terms. The man who says, "My country right or wrong, but still my country," and then in the next breath, "But my country must give me compensation," he classed as "a one-legged patriot." The Senator much preferred to leave at home anyone who had such an attitude toward patriotism. The first group that should be taken into the national military forces must be those young men between the ages of eighteen and thirty who were without families and without dependents. Men between these ages made the best soldiers and sailors. Furthermore, if the soldier were maimed or killed, the Federal Treasury would be relieved of the burden of pensions to widows and dependents. Although admitting that he was not born to be a soldier and had never possessed any military ambition, the Senator confessed that if he were proposing patriotism with the ulterior proposition of being materially compensated, he "would have more contempt for myself than I have ever had in all my life; and sometimes my self-contempt has been exceedingly severe." European countries had not called into service married men until the situation was exceedingly grave. The American situation could not in any way be considered critical from that point of view.

Williams divided the National Guardsmen into two

groups: those who wanted the compensation of \$50 per month and thus exhibited a stagnant patriotism; and those who wanted no extra compensation but wanted to keep patriotism as pure as "the icicles that hang from Diana's temple." If the group that wanted compensation appeared before members of Congress and solicited support for compensation, what should be the answer of the national legislators to them? He would tell them that the government would have no trouble in securing soldiers enough without them. Moreover, it was unbusinesslike for the government to employ a married soldier with the extra compensation, when at least three unmarried soldiers, just as good, could be employed for the same amount of money.

Reed of Missouri stated that the Senator from Mississippi had erroneously argued the question. The National Guardsmen had been organized during times of peace, and the men, some of them married, were trained and willing to continue their service in the army. The question was: Should Congress permit their widows and children at home to suffer while they were making the sacrifice? The insinuation that any man had gone into, or would go into, the National Guard for money was unworthy to be listened to on the floor of the Senate.⁶³

The army appropriation bill, which had been under discussion for some time, passed the Senate on July 27 without a roll call. The Senate had increased the amount to be spent by the army more than \$130,000,000 over the amount as originated in the House, bringing the total appropriation to almost \$314,000,000. The action of the Senate brought

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 9986-89. Williams believed that the standing of the civilized world had greatly slumped. Austria's ultimatum to Serbia and Germany's invasion of defenseless Belgium "made a Christian" of him in regard to the righteousness of the Allied cause. The world was at least one hundred and fifty years more retarded than he had earlier thought. The effect of it all upon his "entire mental, intellectual machinery" was to make him doubt his own sanity. One thing that had been brought out in the recent international catastrophe was that "the highest possible degree of general intellectual culture sometimes carries with it no moral culture at all."

the grand total for preparedness to the unprecedented figure of \$685,343,017. This amount was subjected to a downward revision in conference.⁶⁴ As finally enacted, the appropriation was reduced several millions of dollars, but the movement for preparedness had found a secure place in American policy.

Congress finally adjourned on September 8; the members rushed to their respective states in order to take part in the election campaign which would close sixty days hence. A few weeks after the election returns were known, Williams "heard a rumor or saw in some newspaper" that the Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, intended to quit the Cabinet. He had thought badly of Bryan's departure in 1915. In February, 1916, after threatening for some time to leave, Lindley M. Garrison, Wilson's first Secretary of War, resigned. Williams saw in this new rumor the possibility of much harm to the President. There had already been far too much criticism of the President's lack of ability to get along with members of his Cabinet. A letter from Cedar Grove Plantation urged the Secretary of War to dismiss from his mind any intention that he might have of retiring: "Of course you can make more money in private life, but money is not the only thing, nor the chief thing for which we live."⁶⁵ Baker replied: "There is no man in our public life whose good opinion I value more highly than yours and it makes me very happy . . . that I have your regard. . . . Though a pacific Secretary of War, I am enough of a soldier to await orders from my Commander in Chief."⁶⁶

In the autumn of 1916 the political leaders of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana began a movement to place Williams in the position of majority leader. It was known that Texas, Florida, and other southern states, as well as some

⁶⁴ *New York Times*, July 28, 1916.

⁶⁵ Williams to Newton D. Baker, November 13, 1916, in Williams Papers.

⁶⁶ Baker to Williams, November 22, 1916, *ibid.*

midwestern and far western states would aid. After stating the qualifications of Williams that ideally equipped him for majority leader, a writer concluded, "as a Senate leader, a better man could not be elected."⁶⁷ Williams was already one of the real leaders of the Senate. Certainly no member was held in higher regard by Woodrow Wilson. It was expected, however, that the Mississippian would refuse should the office be tendered.

The Lame Duck Session of the Sixty-fourth Congress began on December 4. In Jackson, Mississippi, just before boarding the train for the national capital, Williams stated that he believed "the policies advocated by President Wilson will be carried above all opposition."⁶⁸ Soon after the session opened, the majority leadership contest came to a showdown as result of the vacancy caused by the retirement of Senator John W. Kern. Williams refused the use of his name in the election. Many believed with Senator William Hughes that "Williams is too valuable on the floor to tie him[self] down for work of this sort. He's our big gun for important action, the man who bears the brunt of the fighting." Hughes's statement may be taken as advice from the White House, as he was from New Jersey, and often played the "role of diplomatic agent in the interchanges between the White House and the Senate."⁶⁹ Williams voluntarily relinquished what might have been the formal leadership of his party in the Senate.

During the closing weeks of the presidential campaign, despite the activities of Williams in national politics, he had kept a watchful eye upon the reports from the battlefields of Europe. He wrote the President praising the stand taken by the Administration and protesting "against Germany's reducing the population of Belgium to slavery." He hoped

⁶⁷ *Washington Times*, November 14, 1916; *New York Times*, November 14, 1916; *Jackson Daily News*, November 13, 1916; *Hattiesburg News*, November 13, 1916.

⁶⁸ *Jackson Daily News*, December 3, 1916.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, December 9, 1916.

our protests would be "strongly and manfully worded." Belgium had certainly suffered enough for being placed "geographically between two great antagonists who wanted to cut each other's throat."⁷⁰ "I entirely agree with you about the Belgian deportations," wrote Wilson. It was one of the most distressing incidents of the war. The President wished that he were not obligated "to express judgments of this sort in private only."⁷¹

On January 22 Wilson made his "peace without victory" address in the Senate chamber—a last appeal to a mad world. Williams spoke of it as "an epoch-making state paper." "The practical effect of the President's statement today is that if Germany, Austria, and Hungary want peace they must state their terms in maximo. For the first time in history the idea that there should be a concert of force to secure permanent peace has been put before the world."⁷²

When Secretary Joseph P. Tumulty, with the President's consent, asked Williams to speak in behalf of the Administration's stand, Williams replied that physically he was unable to make a long speech of any kind at that time. "If I dictate an hour I get to feeling dizzy."⁷³ If he were in the best of health, however, he felt that he was not the man to make the speech. It should be made by an orator. "I am simply a debater, a very good one maybe, but still only a debater." He thanked his friend for the magnificent compliment which the request constituted.⁷⁴

Heedless of its effect on the development of the policy of the United States and other neutrals, the German militar-

⁷⁰ Williams to Wilson. Although this letter contains no heading, date, or place, Wilson's answer of December 5, 1916, indicated that Williams had written it a few days earlier. See Williams Papers.

⁷¹ Wilson to Williams, December 5, 1916, *ibid.*

⁷² New York Times, January 23, 1917.

⁷³ Williams to John P. Mayo, January 17, 1917, in Williams Papers. Williams was in ill-health early in January, due to nervousness, which was the "consequence of overwork and worry." He was having some rheumatic and neuralgic trouble and, in addition, a severe cold.

⁷⁴ *Id.* to Joseph P. Tumulty, January 31, 1917, *ibid.*

ists demanded that "the unrestricted submarine war be launched with the greatest vigor on the 1st of February."⁷⁵ Although it seems that England knew of this note some time before it was made public on January 30, no attempt was made to convey this information to the government of the United States. Wilson learned of the German decision only a few days before it was to become effective. He resolved to appear before a joint meeting of the houses of Congress and lay the matter before them. Colonel Edward M. House and other close advisers urged Wilson to have Congress to declare war immediately, but the President, after much consideration and thought, decided to await overt acts. This would give him time to make an appeal to the American people, in whom he had absolute faith. In the meantime he directed the Secretary of State to announce to the German Ambassador, Bernstorff, that diplomatic relations between Germany and the United States had been severed.

At two o'clock on February 3 Wilson appeared before Congress, jointly assembled, for an address. After the President had read the message, he walked briskly out of the chamber. In the anteroom he was joined immediately by a few of his intimate friends, among whom was Senator Williams, who handed his "Chief" a letter of approval and support. The President from the bottom of his heart thanked the Senator for his confidence.⁷⁶

In the files of Williams' papers is a memorandum dictated by the Senator soon after he returned to his office. It was published in the *New York Times* along with the comments of other Senators: "The President's message was dignified, decorous, not blustering nor bullying, but firm, steady in language and thought, and worthy of a great and acute situation. There was in it all not an unnecessary adjective or adverb, yet the clear English with which the bar-

⁷⁵ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Official German Documents Relating to the World War* (New York, 1923), II, 1210.

⁷⁶ Wilson to Williams, February 3, 1917, in Williams Papers.

barity of Germany's proposed terrorism is set forth is as severe as it could have been made by much indulgence in vituperative language." The only criticism the Senator had heard of the address was that the President did not go far enough when he said "he believed that the German Court meant what it said until an overt act was committed." Many believed an overt act inevitable and that the United States should anticipate it. "Of course," concluded Williams, "everybody hopes the war will not come, but I think the wise man hopes that as an expression of possibility and not as an expression of probability. . . . It may be avoided but if so it will be by the special mercy of God overruling the intentions of men." ⁷⁷

Within a week the Senate "gave convincing evidence of the widespread approval," by upholding the President.⁷⁸ A resolution supporting his program was enacted by an overwhelming majority of 78 to 5. Vardaman cast one of the disapproving votes.

Senator Vardaman was opposing most of the measures and policies of the Democratic Administration. Williams continued to receive letters which gave evidence of strong disagreement with the measures that he had supported in harmony with the Democratic President. An immediate cause for several letters denouncing the policies of the President and the Democratic party was a speech made in Jackson, Mississippi, by William J. Bryan, who was touring the country, speaking in behalf of peace.⁷⁹ Bryan's most recent crusading objective was the establishment of a referendum preliminary to a declaration of war. In reply to one such letter Williams wrote:

"I am very glad I am not with Mr. Bryan at this time. I think he has earned the hearty contempt of every American with red blood in his veins. I am also glad that I was not,

⁷⁷ From the original in the Williams Papers. See *New York Times*, February 4, 1917.

⁷⁸ Baker, *Woodrow Wilson*, VI, 459.

⁷⁹ *Jackson Daily News*, February 17, 1917.

as your friend Vardaman was, one of the two Democrats in the Senate of the United States not willing to vote for a resolution to endorse the President's conduct in severing diplomatic relations with Germany, and if in that vote he does represent Mississippi, as you seem to think, then God help Mississippi!" ⁸⁰

He stated in another reply: "I do not remember to have been quite as much disgusted at any man's conduct as with Bryan's lately, and especially this proposition to hold an election to determine whether or not you were insulted by a foreign nation and your citizens assassinated and drowned." ⁸¹ To several, Williams stressed the patience and wisdom with which the President had handled the difficult problem of neutrality. He rejoiced that Wilson was in the White House and not Bryan, who thought he could "still the wind torn waves of a tornado by putting sweet oil on them," or Roosevelt, who, by this time, "would have been at war with Mexico and the Allies, and the Entente all three." ⁸²

Williams took the floor on February 24 and lamented that the action of such people as Bryan and various Senators had given the appearance that the American people were far from united in support of the stand that Wilson had taken. The press reports, which the Mississippian had kept in his pocket earlier in the day but which he could not locate at that moment, told how many of our population were Irish-Americans, German-Americans, Polish-Americans, and other hyphenated Americans. The speaker desired to know how many were "just simply blamed-fool common, ordinary Americans, with no allegiance to anybody on the surface of the earth except to our own country." In speaking to bitter critics in Congress and in the country who were condemning Wilson because he severed diplomatic relations with

⁸⁰ Williams to W. H. McCargo, February 12, 1917, in Williams Papers.

⁸¹ *Id.* to C. P. Simonton, February 17, 1917, *ibid.*

⁸² *Id.* to J. E. Gilbert, February 16, 1917, *ibid.*

Germany, Senator Williams stated: "You are not covering yourselves in a cloud of peace by hanging your heads or by covering your heads in sand like an ostrich and displaying the balance of your anatomy." ⁸³ The Republicans were charged with subserviency to the munition manufacturers. They had been heavy contributors to the Republican campaign funds and were now threatened with heavy taxation by the excess-profits tax of the revenue bill. Williams made an attack upon the filibustering of the Republicans, "at a time of grave international significance." ⁸⁴ Editorially the *New York Times* spoke of Williams' speech as "a sensible reflection." It was manfully done in a "vigorous and telling way." ⁸⁵

Lodge, Poindexter, and others delayed Congressional sanction in spite of Williams' pleas for action. It was "one of the most spectacular filibusters" the Capitol had "seen in years" and "kept the Senate in session until midnight," ⁸⁶ February 24, when it was agreed that the Emergency Revenue bill would be voted on by the following Wednesday.

Among the many people reading of Williams' part in the debate were two old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Henry. When "Colonel" Henry had concluded the reading of the debate to his wife she said: "John Williams is not always a lovable fellow, but he is the brainiest Senator from the South and ought never to be allowed to leave the Senate till physically unable to reach the Capitol." ⁸⁷

On February 26 Wilson went before Congress and asked for the power to arm merchant ships. He knew that some Republicans, a few outstanding Progressives, and a very small number of the Democrats in the Senate had determined to filibuster in order to bring about a special session. He believed that he had the power to arm merchant ships without the consent of Congress. But his faith in the

⁸³ *Cong. Record*, 64 Cong., 2 Sess., 4090.

⁸⁴ *New York Times*, February 25, 1917.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, February 26, 1917.

⁸⁶ *Vicksburg Herald*, February 25, 1917.

⁸⁷ Robert H. Henry to Williams, February 26, 1917, in Williams Papers.

people and his great desire to act in accordance with their expressed wishes compelled him to appeal to the members of Congress for support on this measure. In requesting of Congress the power to arm merchant ships Wilson gave the Republicans and the few recalcitrant Democratic members just the incentive they needed to bring great national and international attention upon their filibustering scheme. The President had written the bill he wished introduced. It soon became evident that many amendments would be offered. Wilson, always eager for a scrap, determined to fight to the last ditch rather than accept amendments to the bill as he had written it.

The President was greatly aided in carrying his objectives by the publication on March 1 of the Zimmerman note. Williams was not among those who criticized the source of the information; it had been captured by English Intelligence Bureau agents and given to Walter H. Page in London. The *Mississippian* called attention to the authenticity of the document. To him the note was not an issue between the President and the Senate but between the United States and Germany.⁸⁸ He was "up nearly all night out of a sick bed and against Dr. Ruffin's orders" to see that the President's American position was defended from open enmity and secret treachery. They would stand adamant.⁸⁹

Although delayed by filibustering, the bill finally succeeded in passing the House and went over to the Senate chamber, where it met more determined opposition. Twelve members of the Senate bound themselves together as a filibustering group to prevent the passage of the bill. Such distinguished Senators as Norris, La Follette, O'Gorman, and Harry Lane were in the group. Both Williams and Lodge placed themselves on record as favoring the arming of merchant ships. The *Mississippian* had been specific; he would arm the vessels "with some 4 to 6 inch guns, and

⁸⁸ *Cong. Record*, 64 Cong., 2 Sess., 4595, 4596.

⁸⁹ Williams to Wilson, March 1, 1917, in Williams Papers.

publish to the entire world, '*Noli me tangere*'—'Touch me not!' ”⁹⁰

In the bitter debate that followed Wilson's request, Senator Williams spoke several times. To him this last filibuster of the Sixty-fourth Congress was "one of the most humiliating spectacles in the course of American history" and "the most humiliating page in the history of the Senate."⁹¹ He felt that this bill was the most conservative distance the government could go in the preservation of its national honor. Williams urged the chair, after the measure had been discussed six or seven hours, to recognize a motion as being in order to vote upon the bill and the standing amendments.⁹² "After one of the bitterest parliamentary wrangles in the history of the country," the Senate failed to reach a vote, although the House had passed a modified form of the measure by an overwhelming majority.⁹³

At noon, Sunday, March 4, Wilson took the oath of office to begin his second Administration. A few hours later, upon the advice of several members of his Cabinet, the President issued a statement for the press. The Senate was the only legislative body in the world which could not act when a majority was ready to act. This little group of filibusters, characterized by Wilson as the "willful men representing no opinion but their own," had rendered the "Government of the United States helpless and contemptible."⁹⁴

A special session of the Congress began at noon on March 5. Many Senators pledged themselves to change the rules of the Senate so that a majority of that body could act. For a number of years Williams had advocated such action. Formerly he had thought of a two-thirds majority of the members, now he urged a bare majority.⁹⁵ He affixed his signature to a resolution in the possession of Senator Robert L. Owen of Oklahoma which pledged those who signed to

⁹⁰ *Cong. Record*, 64 Cong., 2 Sess., 4091.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 4990.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 4991.

⁹³ *New York Times*, March 5, 1917.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Williams to W. C. Fox, March 10, 1917, Williams Papers.

bind themselves together to alter the rules of the Senate.⁹⁶

On March 6 members of the "little group of willful men" began to arise in the Senate on points of personal privilege to defend the course that they had taken in opposition to the armed merchant marine bill. A very sharp colloquy was engaged in by the two Senators from Mississippi. The Jackson *Daily News* carried across the entire top of its front page in seventy-two point block letters, the headline "SENATOR WILLIAMS FLAYS VARDAMAN." Williams pronounced Vardaman's explanation incredible. Vardaman retaliated that he took his orders only from the people of Mississippi.⁹⁷ Williams felt no hesitancy in criticizing the statements made by his colleague. The only limit was "never to say anything that is untrue and unjust."⁹⁸ The evidence of dislike between the two men was dramatically revealed.

Expressions of the anti-Administrationists worried Williams. They could have satisfied themselves as opponents of the bill, and their constituents back home, "by their speeches and their votes." Filibustering upon small matters was a harmless and, frankly, an amusing game, but to prevent the Senate from expressing an opinion upon a matter as serious and as critical as the bill which lay before them—a matter of public safety and national honor—was absolutely intolerable.⁹⁹ He clearly saw the effect of such action on our relations with Germany.

The special session, which began Wilson's second term, lasted only ten days. Williams, before taking leave of Washington after the adjournment of Congress, dictated a letter of loyalty and support to his friend in the White House. He enclosed several letters which he had received, for the President's amusement.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ New York *Times*, March 5, 1917.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, March 7, 1917; Jackson *Daily News*, March 6, 1917.

⁹⁸ Williams to O. F. Lawrence, March 12, 1917, in Williams Papers.

⁹⁹ *Id.* to Fox, March 10, 1917, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Id.* to Wilson, March 17, 1917, *ibid.*

Later on the same day, March 12, Williams left for Savannah, Georgia, to visit his daughter, Julia, who had married Mr. Rives Boykin, an officer of the navy. The Senator had received many letters requesting him to make speeches throughout the state and elsewhere in the country. These invitations he refused. His program for his vacation was to sleep until Congress met again. "I need rest, for it looks to me that there is a lot of work ahead of us, and I want to go back to Washington with a large reserve supply of sleep on hand."¹⁰¹

Upon Williams' return to Washington a short time before the issuance of the declaration of war, the President called him to the White House very early one morning. The two statesmen were in conference for a long time. They discussed the various phases of the international situation and the possibility of America's entry into the European war. Several days passed before the world knew of any decision that had been reached in this intimate conference. To Williams was assigned the task of preparing his colleagues in the Senate for the war message without revealing its proximity. "When Senator Williams arose to go, President Wilson laid a hand on his shoulder. It stayed there a second. No word passed and suddenly the so-called cold and unemotional Wilson threw his arms around the old southern statesman and for a moment they stood there in a final embrace. Then they parted—the 'Tiger' to his task on Capitol Hill, the President to his role as savior of democracy."¹⁰²

By March 21 several overt acts had occurred. Wilson, having secluded himself for ten days of thought, meditation, and prayer, issued a call for a special session of Congress to convene at noon on April 2. Congress met and Wilson appeared at half-past eight at night in the House of Repre-

¹⁰¹ *Id.* to a personal friend, probably Fred Sullens, editor of *Daily News*, *ibid.* See Jackson *Daily News*, March 28, 1917.

¹⁰² Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, September 29, 1932.

sentatives, which had been prepared for the momentous occasion. Seated in the front row, the third seat from the center at the President's right, was the senior Senator from Mississippi. As the President read in a smooth steady voice the message that he had so studiously prepared, a member of the President's Cabinet watched Williams closely. The Senator "sat huddled up, listening attentively and approvingly" with his right hand cupped behind his right ear, "removing it frequently for an instant, just long enough to give a single clap . . . but quickly replacing his hand behind his ear lest he fail to hear the next words which were to fall from Wilson's lips." When the President talked on the idealistic motive for going to war and stated "the world must be made safe for democracy," Williams instantly sensed the full and immense meaning of it. Alone he began to applaud and he did it "gravely and emphatically," until the whole chamber "resounded with uproarious applause."¹⁰³

Among the many messages the President received the next day was one from Williams, which read in part: "Your last speech to the United States will stand throughout our history as one of the four or five greatest state papers up to this date. It far transcends that of Madison when he entered the War of 1812, what Polk had to say when we resented the Mexican invasion between the Rio Grande and the Nueces, and classes with Jefferson's first inaugural, Washington's farewell address and Lincoln's inaugural."¹⁰⁴ Wilson was judicious in "advising Congress not to declare war, but to recognize the fact that Germany was already making war upon us, and, in announcing to the world our reason for taking up the gauntlet you did not confine yourself to a mere list of American grievances, but also planted the flag as the emblem in continuance of the assertion of the

¹⁰³ Houston, *Eight Years with Wilson's Cabinet*, I, 255; Walter Millis, *Road to War; America, 1914-1917* (New York, 1935), 439-40; Baker, *Woodrow Wilson*, VI, 514-15.

¹⁰⁴ Williams to Wilson, April 3, 1917, in Williams Papers.

same fundamental inalienable rights of men, which Hamiltonians called glittering generalities." ¹⁰⁵

If the address deserved any praise at all, it was because "it was really and truly spoken from the heart," answered Wilson. The speech possessed a "simplicity of conviction" which "robbed it of all false elements of expression." ¹⁰⁶

A few hours before the President delivered his speech, Williams gave out a formal statement "favoring an aggressive war to the finish with Germany." He included a program he had devised. In the first place, the Allied nations should be given free access to American ports, and Canada should be allowed unhampered use of railroads, rivers, and canals within the country for the transportation of troops if she needed them. Secondly, Williams wanted to exempt from income tax Americans who invested in bonds of the Allied nations. Thirdly, he hoped a million men could begin training at once, and another million within three months. A few thousand American soldiers should be sent to the battlefield immediately. Fourthly, all German ships coming into American ports should be seized to compensate for damages done by German submarines. Lastly, and most important of all, Williams hoped to substitute for war something to guarantee permanent peace. ¹⁰⁷

The Senate debate on the war resolution began and closed on April 4. Late in the night it passed by a vote of 82 to 6. The House, on April 6, enacted the same resolution 373 to 50. The opposition to the enactment of the war resolution was promoted chiefly by La Follette, Norris, and Vardaman. Williams, in attempting to answer the opposition, accused these men of treason, or at least of grazing the edge of treason. ¹⁰⁸ Although making criticisms of the remarks of Norris

¹⁰⁵ *Id. to id.*, April 9, 1917, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Wilson to Williams, April 7, 1917, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, April 3, 1917.

¹⁰⁸ Walter Millis has more recently written in characterizing Williams' comments upon Norris' remarks, that "opposition was already treason." Millis, *Road to War*, 449.

and others, Williams kept his artillery well loaded and fired it all in answer to a speech made by La Follette. A Mississippi editor, noted for his bitter criticism, stated that "with words that cut like the keen edge of a knife, Williams removed the metaphorical hide from one of the 'little group of willful men.' " ¹⁰⁹

The speech of the Senator from Wisconsin was characterized as "pro-German, pretty nearly pro-Goth, and pro-Vandal, which was anti-American President and anti-American Congress, and anti-American people." Adding that he had loved the Senator from Wisconsin until recently, Williams professed to have "no sort of patience" for any Senator who would stand and eulogize the enemy. He pleaded for a little more common sense in this very important matter before them. Anyone who said that the American Congress was about to involve the American people in war was either a knave or a fool, depending upon his accumulation of knowledge. But within a few hours Congress accepted the resolution that carried the United States into war. As an American, the Mississippian was proud to face two things in the problem that confronted him—the opportunity it presented, and the necessity of it. La Follette had twisted the English Lion's tail in his oration. Williams lamented that there had been demagogues doing that very same thing since the days of George Washington. He called the "rich man's war and poor man's fight" definition of the situation a lie. ¹¹⁰

In answer to La Follette's statement that if the war were confined to Europe, America had nothing to lose, Williams reached the heights of patriotic oratory: "Have we no honor that we might lose? . . . Have we no regard for the flag floating from the flagstaff of our ships that were sunk without warning upon the high seas? Is sentiment rot? Is patri-

¹⁰⁹ Jackson *Daily News*, April 5, 1917.

¹¹⁰ Tansill, *America Goes to War*, 32-135, 660-62, and Appendices A. and B., has shown the influence of wealth in causing the United States to enter the war.

otism rot? Is there nothing that a man has which he either possesses or possesses him that is precious to him except money and material advantage?"

Williams hoped that peace would never be made until the Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs had ceased to reign. "The unspeakable Turk" must be driven from Europe. The speaker admitted his anger, and stated that a gentleman always resented an insult more than an injury. There was at least something worse than death, "to live forever coupled with your other self while your other self tells you that you are a pusillanimous, degenerate coward."¹¹¹

Vardaman saw the "path of duty through the mists of passion,"¹¹² and could not sign a death warrant for hundreds of thousands of our finest young men and burden future generations with crushing financial obligations. "Hambone" commented upon such views in the Senate chamber as follows: "Dem 'Peace' Talkers up dah in Washington Gwine Keep Shootin dey li'l Pacerfying Pop-Guns Eroun' twell fus thing they knows Sentah John Sharp Williams Gwine Git Mad En Den—Uh-uh! Day ain' Nevah Done no Yelling fo' peace YIT!"¹¹³

Telegrams and letters, hundreds of them, overwhelmed Williams and his office force. Every state in the Union was represented among the messages received. A New Yorker wired: "Wish to God we could write 'New York' after your name instead of 'Mississippi.'"¹¹⁴ Of all the messages he received, he appreciated none more than the telegram from 6,000 citizens of Jackson, Mississippi, which told of the "greatest demonstration in the history of the city,"¹¹⁵ and

¹¹¹ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 1 Sess., 234-38. An article published by Williams as "The Ties That Bind: Our National Sympathy with English Traditions, the French Republic, and the Russian Outburst of Liberty," in *loc. cit.*, 281-86, closely resembles this speech.

¹¹² *New York Times*, April 5, 1917.

¹¹³ *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, April 4, 1917. J. P. Alley was the cartoonist.

¹¹⁴ Henry C. Day to Williams, April 6, 1917, in Williams Papers.

¹¹⁵ Fred Sullens to *id.*, April 6, 1917, *ibid.*

a letter from former President Roosevelt. The letter read:

"I wish to congratulate you on your fine speech in answer to La Follette. All that you said of him was deserved and far more than deserved. His action has made him a disgrace to the American public life, for he has been guilty of moral treason against the Republic. As an American I thank you." ¹¹⁶

It was characteristic of Williams that he could always see something humorous in the most critical occasions. In answering a letter from New York City that accused him in his reply to the speech of La Follette of brutally attacking the person of the Senator from Wisconsin, Williams replied he had made no attack, that the person had been "wrongly informed from Berlin." He wanted to make no such attack. But if he had been so inclined, La Follette's hair would have scared him. ¹¹⁷

If the Senator could see humor in the situation, the press could not. Intelligent Democrats should thank God for the "clear note of honor and decency." ¹¹⁸ Williams was the "Isocrates of the Occasion" in that he arose like a giant and stood apart and alone. ¹¹⁹ "No pacifist nor pussyfooter" was this Southerner. If La Follette had "misstated history to the advantage of Germany," ¹²⁰ Williams' contentions for neutral rights were "democracy rising to an occasion." ¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Theodore Roosevelt to *id.*, April 12, 1917, *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Williams to John Larkin, April 12, 1917, *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Baltimore Sun*, April 27, 1917.

¹¹⁹ *Memphis News Scimitar*, April 6, 1917.

¹²⁰ *Mobile Register*, April 6, 1917.

¹²¹ *New York Times*, April 6, 1917.

Chapter XIII

THE WAR BEGINS

WHEN the United States found itself at war, many new problems confronted the government. An army millions strong had to be recruited, trained, and equipped. The navy, too, required many thousands of men and hundreds of new ships. The industrial system of the country had to be changed to a wartime footing and production speeded up in industry and in agriculture. Not the smallest problem was that of financing this stupendous program. The United States immediately advanced billions of dollars to the Allies, most of which was spent in the United States for food and supplies.

Two groups formed in the Senate in regard to recruiting for the American army, "volunteerists" and "compulsorists." Williams belonged to the latter group. No one, perhaps, opposed compulsory military training in peacetime more than did John Sharp Williams.¹ He believed, however, that compulsory service was the only means of fighting a successful war against Germany. Not only should there be a draft act, but enlistment should be for the period of the war. Williams knew of the embarrassment generals suffered in the Civil War because of short-term enlistments. When he urged upon Wilson the acceptance of his plan,² Wilson replied that he had already several times discussed this problem with the Secretary of War. The President hoped that Williams would find the bill which he had

¹ Jackson *Daily News*, April 23, 1917.

² Williams to Wilson, April 11, 1917, in Williams Papers.

"drafted with the War Department" to contain "substantially the same provisions" which the Senator urged.³

Our boys must be adequately prepared before being sent abroad, argued Williams. It was not the same situation which had confronted the Confederacy. Compulsory military training would not be necessary if the troops were being trained to defend an invasion of their homes.⁴ Williams gave as his reasons for believing in compulsory, selective draft: first, "to spot traitors"; and second, to assure that compulsory military training, at the conclusion of the war, would be done away with for all time.⁵ This outlawing was to be done by an international organization provided with sufficient forces to guarantee peace.

As submitted to Congress, exemptions from the draft embraced clergymen, various kinds of public servants, including those in munition manufacturing and agriculture, and conscientious objectors. In giving military exemption to Quakers, Dunkards, and Moravians, the government was following its earliest precedents. Critics of the President falsely stated that he was making exemptions for Catholics. Williams denied this accusation for the President.⁶ There were those who were afraid that the draft law would make people become socialists. Williams said that if a man became a socialist because his country called him to fight for its liberty, "he must be a socialist already."⁷ When the Selective Service Act became a law, May 18, it contained many of the provisions for which the Mississippian had contended.

Williams was giving the very best that was in him "to the support of his country and his flag, as he did nineteen years ago . . . in the miniature conflict with Spain."⁸ He did this in many ways: by making speeches in the Senate, by

³ Wilson to Williams, April 17, 1917, *ibid.*

⁴ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 1 Sess., 946-47.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1441.

⁶ Williams to R. W. McAllister, May 2, 1917, in Williams Papers.

⁷ *Id.* to J. W. Melton and others, July 3, 1917, *ibid.*

⁸ *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, June 11, 1917.

writing numerous letters, and by penning an occasional article. A speech, really an "extemporaneous address," before a meeting of the American Academy of Political and Social Science was published in its *Annals*. His address, "'War to Stop War,'" defended compulsory military training. War was imbecility and insanity, he stated, and it must cease if civilization was to be saved. To keep war at a minimum it would be necessary to form a court or an association of nations or an amphictyonic council of the civilized world. Call it what you may—this organization must be given power to make recalcitrant nations present their international problems and accept judicious settlements rather than resort to war. The real cause of the great conflict was declared to be Germany's economic expansion to the southeast.⁹

Months after the draft law had been put into operation, speeches were made in the Senate in opposition to it. Williams answered one such speech made by Senator Thomas W. Hardwick of Georgia. At the beginning of Williams' reply he was interrupted by Hardwick, who stated that, in view of their personal relations, if Williams had any criticism which he would like to express, "the Senate floor is not the proper place for that expression." Williams immediately replied, as he always did under such circumstances, that his personal feelings never entered into any stand that he might take on public matters.

He spoke for more than an hour in defending the draft act and the idealistic cause which he, Wilson, and others had as a motive for going to war. Far from being a rich man's war and a poor man's fight, the rich were being drafted on an equality with the poor. If any man would not fight for his country under the provocation which the United States had received, he would not fight "if a man

⁹ John Sharp Williams, "'War to Stop War,'" in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, LXXII (1917), 178-85.

stepped into his front door and slapped his wife's face." ¹⁰ The Mississippian "turned savagely upon Senator Hardwick with a clenched fist." ¹¹ Williams, although apparently angry, preserved his sense of humor. The Senator from Georgia had boasted of his pro-Americanism, Williams remarked, but "as the fellow said to a naked man who was boasting about his devotion to the cause of decency, he has a very poor way of showing it." On the spur of the moment Williams had almost called Hardwick "the pouter pigeon statesman from Georgia." He had watched "little pouter pigeons swell up their throats and when they were self-inflated, poke their heads out and jerk them back two or three times." This was "one of Hardwick's favorite gestures." ¹²

Williams was producing stronger arguments when he stated that the time to debate the draft act was before its enactment. After it became a law, regardless of whether any particular Senator had favored it or not, he should be American enough to support it throughout the war. He closed his intensely patriotic speech with a prayer for united support, not only for this measure but for all wartime policies. ¹³

Among the problems in the administration of the draft law was the mobilization of a large number of Negroes in the South. It would not do to have Negro and white soldiers drilling together in the same camps in that section. ¹⁴ Williams suggested to the President the feasibility of establishing training camps in Cuba for colored troops. ¹⁵ Because of racial prejudice and natural distrust in the South, many white people were afraid of the Negro in a soldier's uniform with a gun on his shoulder. This fear led them to write

¹⁰ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 1 Sess., 6744.

¹¹ *New York Times*, September 8, 1917.

¹² Williams to Nathaniel French, October 8, 1917, in Williams Papers.

¹³ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 1 Sess., 6744.

¹⁴ Williams to Newton D. Baker, July 20, 1917, in Williams Papers.

¹⁵ *Id.* to Wilson, November 13, 1917, *ibid.*

letters to plead that the draft act should not be applied to the Negro in the South. Williams saw no reason why Negroes should be exempt from "death and wounds in behalf of the perpetuity and safety and honor of their republic." Why should a white man be afraid of a Negro even though the latter was a trained soldier? If white people "are not the superior of the negro, in courage and endurance, intelligence and everything that goes to entitle a race to predomination, then we must fall as all people of all times have fallen who were degenerate." ¹⁶

Three weeks after the war began Williams urged the the President to form foreign legions in the United States. Between 250,000 and 300,000 men could be raised from foreign elements, he believed.¹⁷ This suggestion interested Wilson "very much indeed." He took it up with the Secretary of War, who decided that the suggestion was a bad one, for it would rob the army of homogeneity, set a precedent for other volunteers, and suggest that the United States was using foreigners instead of Americans.¹⁸

The problems which came up in connection with the expansion of American military forces interested Williams especially because he and Mrs. Williams had four sons, all of whom were of fighting age. They sought to do their part in the war. Robert Webb, the eldest, joined the army as a private during his younger days, but soon became dissatisfied and asked his father's political influence to get himself removed. His father told him, however, "that he had made

¹⁶ *Id.* to D. C. Barber, April 3, 1917, *ibid.* With the increasing number of men conscripted, there arose the problem of establishing training camps, and every Representative and Senator was trying to secure a share of these camps for his district or state. A movement to establish an aviation field at Jackson, Mississippi, under the name of John Sharp Williams Aviation Field, failed. The location did not meet the requirements of the army officials sent to inspect the grounds. Williams was instrumental, however, in establishing an aviation field near Aberdeen, Mississippi, where Charles A. Lindbergh received his early training. See C. G. Edgar to Williams, November 13, 1917, *ibid.*

¹⁷ Williams to Wilson, April 27, 1917, *ibid.*

¹⁸ Wilson to Williams, May 4, 1917, *ibid.*

his own bed and should lie in it for a while and that the discipline of the army would do him good.”¹⁹ For several years the son remained in the army, serving in Alaska and the Philippine Islands as well as in the United States.

John Sharp, Jr., the second son, had some years before taken on the Sharp plantation; he now claimed exemption from the selective draft act because of his extensive farming interests, his wife, and his child. The third son, Allison Ridley, was a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology when the war began. He finished his degree at this institution in the latter part of May and immediately enlisted in the engineering corps of the army. The youngest son, Christopher Harris III, was a junior in the law school at the University of Virginia. The student body of the school, as did some others in the country, organized itself into regiments for different types of military service. “Kit” became a member of the campus cavalymen and desired to join that branch of the army. This information was given to the Secretary of War and to the President.²⁰

Williams was happy that his sons were proving themselves worthy of their heritage, and Mrs. Williams took the “fact that three of her boys were going into the army very nicely.”²¹ Many letters came to Williams during the period of the war from parents, especially mothers, of sons who were in the army and in the navy. Some of the boys had committed acts which required punishment, others were dissatisfied with army life, and all thought the Senator might be able to do something about it. To all these complaints Williams gave his attention. He always referred proudly in his letters to his three sons in the army. They were receiving the same treatment and the same food that the other soldiers were receiving.

¹⁹ Williams to Rev. O. P. Armour, November 12, 1915, *ibid.* Armour was seeking the removal of his son through political influence.

²⁰ *Id.* to Newton D. Baker, April 5, 1917; *id.* to Wilson, April 19, 1917, *ibid.*

²¹ *Id.* to Mrs. Flora C. Huntington, May 22, 1917, *ibid.*

The military record of the Williams boys was meritorious. Two of them became commissioned officers. Webb, the oldest, oddly enough, despite his earlier training, failed to pass the examination. The officer would not tell him why he was not selected. The son was disappointed, as were other members of the family.²² Williams did not endeavor in any way to secure a commission for his eldest son. Webb soon obtained a position as Progress Engineer of the Emergency Fleet Corporation and served in this position until after the war was over.

Only one of the sons crossed the Atlantic to France. Kit left the United States in May, 1918. In a last letter addressed to "Dearest Papa" he stated: "I will do my best whatever task is assigned to me and I hope you are glad I have gone. . . . Kiss my mama for me every day and *make* her be cheerful and happy." ²³ Kit fought in the battle of the Argonne. His mother was very uneasy during those fateful hours, but soon after the battle she received a cablegram: "Came out without a scratch." ²⁴ Just before the war was over Williams wrote "a gentleman's letter to another gentleman," General Pershing. He was requested to extend any courtesy possible to Kit and to others who were mentioned. The General replied that if he, at any time, ran across any of those named, he would be "glad to have a word with them." ²⁵

After the war was over, Williams saw no reason for keeping American troops in Europe except to assure definitely that Germany would remain at peace. This, he believed, would be accomplished when Germany signed the peace treaty.²⁶ Kit was anxious to return home. Two important

²² *Id.* to George Faison, November 5, 1917, *ibid.*

²³ Kit Williams to Williams, May 11, 1918, *ibid.*

²⁴ Williams to J. Z. George, November 27, 1918, *ibid.* The cablegram was not found in the Williams Papers.

²⁵ *Id.* to John J. Pershing, October 30, 1918; Pershing to Williams, November 23, 1918, *ibid.*

²⁶ Williams to Walter G. Buckley, October 21, 1918, *ibid.*

events in his life had occurred since he left his native land. His sister, Julia, had died and Gladys, his wife, had given birth to a son, Christopher Harris IV. Not, however, until March 17, 1919, did he arrive in New York.

The Williams family had won its share of fame in another war. Two of the boys had been promoted without the slightest political influence. Kit was advanced for bravery in the battle of the Argonne, and Allison won recognition for his remarkable engineering ability in the United States.²⁷ A third member of the family, Lieutenant Commander Joel W. Bunkley, a son-in-law, was awarded a Distinguished Service Medal by the Navy Department for bravery in handling heavy naval guns.

The United States determined at the beginning of the war to finance a large part of it through immediate taxation. Revenue bills were enacted which greatly increased the taxes on incomes, inheritances, luxuries, and included many necessities which had hitherto been untaxed. It was soon clear, however, that taxation could not be relied upon as the main source of revenue. It was necessary to resort to the flotation of loans. Four of the five issues came during the period of hostilities, and the Victory Loan, in April, 1919, after the peace conference had assembled in Paris. The ratio of borrowing to taxation was about two to one, with a total war cost of more than \$30,000,000,000, including loans to the Allies.

Williams "was the first member of either house of Congress" to invest all his savings in the initial loan which the government floated.²⁸ On May 7 in a letter addressed to William G. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury, he enclosed a check for the sum of \$14,000 to be used to purchase 3 per cent bonds, of which \$3,500 in value were to be made out to Sally Williams Bunkley and the rest were to be made out

²⁷ *Id.* to Isaac R. Sherwood, September 29, 1919, *ibid.*

²⁸ Jackson *Daily News*, June 4, 1917.

in the Senator's name.²⁹ This represented the accumulation of a lifetime. Williams had never been much of a businessman and had never had the time nor the inclination to save money. Later in the war he purchased other government securities, including \$1,000 in savings stamps.³⁰ He made contributions to such war agencies as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and Y.M.C.A. In most of these contributions the Senator sent his check to the local authorities in his home county, stating that he preferred to contribute through that medium rather than through the agencies in Washington.³¹

To the campaigns that were put on to sell the loans to the people, Williams, as most others in public life, contributed his time and talent. He often communicated with the head of the Treasury Department, under whom these drives were made. A number of letters and telegrams passed between the Senator and the Secretary in regard to the former's aid in securing the success of these undertakings. On November 1, 1917, Williams wrote McAdoo his congratulations on the success of a loan drive.³² The Secretary of the Treasury wrote in reply: "You have placed the country under very great obligation by reason of your splendid work during the Liberty Loan campaign."³³

Another problem to which Williams turned his attention was insurance for the army and the navy. "My own idea," said the Senator, "will be . . . to insure every member of the Army and Navy at a fixed sum. . . . Let us pay each person a fixed sum each month and deduct a specific amount for insurance."³⁴ The insurance was to last only during the war. Williams did not want the government to go into any permanent insurance business. The following

²⁹ Williams to McAdoo, May 7, 1917, in Williams Papers.

³⁰ *Id.* to H. E. Bradshaw, May 13, 1918, *ibid.*

³¹ *Id.* to M. M. Brister, June 21, 1917, *ibid.*

³² *Id.* to McAdoo, November 1, 1917, *ibid.*

³³ McAdoo to Williams, November 7, 1917, *ibid.*

³⁴ Williams to Wilson, June 15, 1917, *ibid.*

restrictions he thought should be placed on the insurance: (1) the beneficiaries to be limited; (2) the amount to be limited; (3) the insurance to be restricted to those in service; (4) the policy to be nonassignable; (5) the policy to be exempt from debts and execution.³⁵

In the change of the industrial setup, the government created numerous administrative boards, bureaus, and commissions which were placed under the control of the executive department. Williams favored the creation of these boards and bitterly opposed any attempt of Congress to criticize the President in his administrative duties. Time after time he took the floor to oppose schemes that would hinder and delay the war policies of the Federal government. In a letter to a fellow member of the Senate, Williams succinctly stated his opinion; he "had rather trust the President and the administration than to trust any administrative bureau."³⁶

One proposal that arose was for the creation of a Congressional committee to assist in expending the vast amount of money which Congress had appropriated and would appropriate for carrying on the war. Williams bitterly opposed any such scheme. While aboard the presidential yacht *Mayflower*, Wilson wrote to Williams and requested him to do his "utmost to prevent the creation of such a board." The creation of any group which might exercise an independent or co-ordinate authority "would be fatal to the unity of the administration." The President requested the co-operation of the Senator "in preventing what would no doubt be a practical blunder of the greatest sort."³⁷ Williams agreed precisely with the President. It would soon become a committee "upon the conduct of the war." There never had been a war conducted by a parliamentary committee. War, above all things, required undivided and supreme au-

³⁵ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 1 Sess., 7690.

³⁶ Williams to Robert L. Owen, July 20, 1917, in Williams Papers.

³⁷ Wilson to Williams, September 1, 1917, *ibid.*

thority. Even if a Republican were President, the Senator "would not hear for one moment" any talk of Congressional interference.³⁸ To another, Williams revealed those supporting this measure and their reasons for doing so. Champ Clark didn't like Wilson. The Republican Steering Committee in the Senate hated him. Three or four men on the Democratic Steering Committee were unfriendly to the Administration. "It would be better to call that damn fool Committee . . . 'the committee on the criticism of the President.' " The guardian committee appointed over Lincoln had done no good. Some of its members had feathered their own financial nests. In conclusion, Williams wrote that the senatorial "asses meet one another every day and talk about the last fellow's prolonged speech." ³⁹

Senator Stone and others felt that the powers given to the President would lead to the establishment of "an autocracy as powerful as that of the Kaiser." ⁴⁰ Williams believed that the American people were intelligent enough "to know the difference between democracy and anarchistic democracy." He trusted the common sense of the American people to hold things in check at the right point. He had no patience with men "who seem more afraid of usurpation by their own executive of powers conferred by their own national legislature than they are afraid of the risk of losing a war for liberty and democracy and the freedom of nationalities throughout the world." ⁴¹

After the defeat of the Congressional committee plan, Senator George E. Chamberlain moved to create a bipartisan War Cabinet that would function somewhat as any Congressional committee. Senator Hitchcock, a ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, strongly supported the War Cabinet bill. He maintained that the President could not know the real situation. The various

³⁸ Williams to Wilson, September 5, 1917, *ibid.*

³⁹ *Id.* to J. Sloat Fasset, July 31, 1917, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ New York Times, July 15, 1917.

⁴¹ Williams to E. R. Sherman, July 5, 1917, in Williams Papers.

war activities of the nation had not been properly co-ordinated. Williams criticized this proposition as "stupid." Those who had played a pro-German game when trying to prevent the shipping of munitions to the Allied nations were now continuing to be sympathetic to Germany's interest by muckraking the President.⁴² In characteristic style Williams explained Chamberlain's action to a friend. It reminded him of an old story about a man who heard a rattling of some sort and went to the door to see what was the matter. Blunderingly he went to the closet door instead of the back door, "and forgetting that he himself left some limburger cheese in the closet the night before, exclaimed: 'Great God! It looks like a hurricane is coming. Everything is dark as hell and smells like cheese!' " ⁴³ Even if the bill should pass, the President would veto it. "Don't forget that Wilson has a backbone and a long jaw with him and when he thinks he is right he is going ahead." ⁴⁴

Williams' papers contain many letters written in the latter part of 1917 and in 1918 by admirers over the country congratulating and complimenting him on his actions in public life. A professor at Johns Hopkins University wrote: "You seem to be the only man capable of a really efficient American leadership, and I should be glad if you can throw mere senatorial courtesy to the winds and assume the place you can take."⁴⁵ "I want to tell you, old man," wrote Elihu Root, "how grateful I am and how much I admire what you have been doing in the Senate during this year."⁴⁶

During the Congressional election of 1918, criticism of the President and the Administration was especially severe. Williams criticized the "boys" in Washington for playing politics while the boys in France were fighting Germans. Speaking on the Indian Appropriation bill, he read to the

⁴² New York Times, February 5, 1918.

⁴³ Williams to Samuel S. Mehard, January 29, 1918, in Williams Papers.

⁴⁴ *Id.* to W. M. Cox, February 11, 1918, *ibid.*

⁴⁵ R. V. Magoffin to Williams, July 21, 1917, *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Elihu Root to *id.*, September 22, 1917, *ibid.*

Senate a cablegram which he had just received from the front in France. It was in his own private cipher, unknown to the Germans, the Allies, and the President: "Most critical day of this long and hard battle. Withstood attacks of the Teutons here with comparative satisfaction. Huns attacked with infantry, cavalry, heavy and light artillery, aeroplanes and gas. Had to give way a bit, but are not downhearted. Rumor of attack on Washington. How about it?" To which the Senator said he had replied: "Purely a gas attack—poisonous, of course, if it had got us. Enemy was carefully prepared; we were in a measure taken unawares; most of us not present; but, in the providence of God, the wind shifted and the enemy was stifled." ⁴⁷

The Mississippian again pleaded for loyalty to the Administration and for the putting aside of all partisan policies. He would vote against any Democratic nominee for office in the state of Mississippi if the Republicans could nominate a man more loyal. The attempts of some to place politics above war activities were characterized in no uncertain terms: "In comparison with winning this war, I don't care a damn about the temporary faith of the Democratic or the Republican party; or about the next nominee of either party; or about the next man to be selected President but I shall remember with absolute hatred every man who has permitted his opinion concerning these things to warp his judgment or to control his conduct." ⁴⁸

Williams believed that the Senate needed to speed up its rate of enacting legislation. The procedure, he said, had come to the point where several members appeared in the chamber only about once a week for the purpose of showing the world that Americans were not united in the war. The obstructionists in the Senate were divided into three groups by the Senator: (1) the pacifists at any price; (2) politicians who were bent on getting German votes; and (3) those

⁴⁷ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 2 Sess., 4133.

⁴⁸ Williams to Elihu Root, January 31, 1918, in Williams Papers.

who really thought that by America's delay men and money would be saved. Congress should pass the necessary laws, adjourn and go home, turning the work of running the war over to the various administrative agencies that had been created to carry out that phase of the work.⁴⁹ The Republicans adhered closely to their policy, adopted earlier in 1917, of keeping Congress in session as much as possible. Williams often attacked his political enemies for their dilatory tactics.

Outside the halls of Congress, Theodore Roosevelt continued to find fault with the policies of the government. Pressure had been brought upon Wilson to make Colonel Roosevelt a general and place him at the head of a division of troops to be sent to the battle front as soon as possible after the war started. Williams opposed the plan publicly on the floor of the Senate,⁵⁰ and privately in his correspondence. "To make Teddy Roosevelt a General would be about as ridiculous a thing as was ever done."⁵¹ To the White House in a letter marked "confidential" Williams was even more outspoken. No mere politics should force the President to make such an appointment. Certainly the former President was no more capable now than he was during the Spanish-American War. He should not have any higher title. Williams, who had generally held a high regard for Roosevelt, said that Roosevelt's "obsession that he is a military genius is almost as great as that of Thomas H. Benton."⁵² Roosevelt never quite recovered from the disappointment of Wilson's rejection of his scheme. The former President also figured prominently in the movement to create a War Cabinet, a movement which Williams had

⁴⁹ *Id.* to J. Sloat Fasset, July 20, 1917, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 1 Sess., 1441.

⁵¹ Williams to Darby M. Seales, April 4, 1917, in Williams Papers.

⁵² *Id.* to Wilson, April 4, 1917, *ibid.* One careful student of this period has written that "Roosevelt . . . died unconvinced that a volunteer army raised around his name would have been inconsistent with either the efficiency or the principle of selective service." See Frederic L. Paxson, *America At War, 1917-1918* (Boston, 1939), 7.

helped defeat. The Mississippian was for letting Roosevelt alone, "to exploit himself in a self-selected limelight . . . the American people would catch on to his 'curves' and he would fall flat." Teddy was trying to tell the people, Williams thought, that there should be two American Administrations, with Wilson at the head of one and Roosevelt at the head of the other.⁵³

In vivid contrast to Roosevelt's desire to participate personally in the war was Robert M. La Follette's continued opposition to the war even after hostilities had begun between the United States and Germany. The Senator from Wisconsin made an antiwar speech in St. Paul on September 29, 1917. Incidentally, the speaker was incorrectly reported and those responsible refused to correct the mistake. The Commission of Public Safety of Minnesota petitioned the United States Senate to expel the Senator because of the speech. This resolution, soon after it was received, was placed in the hands of a committee, where it remained for some fourteen months before it was dismissed. However, on January 16, 1919, when the presiding officer asked a roll call on the adoption of the resolution submitted by Senator Dillingham of Vermont to dismiss any effort to expel Senator La Follette, Williams arose and exclaimed: "I have a few words to say about that." The Mississippian then proceeded to excoriate the Wisconsin Senator as he had done when the United States entered the war. It was given to all of us "once in our lifetime, to rise to the heights." Senator La Follette, in Williams' opinion, had failed to take advantage of the opportunity which presented itself during the war period. Williams' speech had very little effect, and the motion to dismiss all procedure against the Wisconsin Senator passed by a vote of 50 to 21.⁵⁴

In Williams' files there is considerable correspondence between the Mississippian and Theodore Roosevelt, show-

⁵³ Williams to Clay Sharkey, January 29, 1918, in Williams Papers.

⁵⁴ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 3 Sess., 1526-27.

ing that the two forgot their differences in a mutual dislike for La Follette. Williams urged the former President to come out in the open and request that La Follette be expelled from the Senate. Roosevelt took that position in a speech at Racine, Wisconsin, and the audience "unanimously passed the resolution advising the Senate to take him out."⁵⁵ The former President had earlier written Williams a letter marked "private," requesting him to show the letter to Senators Lodge and Hiram W. Johnson and then to tear it up. In a reply Williams wrote that Senator Lodge was more of "our way of thinking" than Senator Johnson. The whole thing had become a nightmare to Williams. He could not remember "ever to have hated anything in my life until this war began, and now I hate a good many things and several persons."⁵⁶ Because of Williams' outspoken opposition on the floor of the Senate, La Follette refused to speak to him after the first bitter encounter in April, 1917. Williams had believed him to be one who could "give and take punishment."⁵⁷

Williams probably thought he was liberal about letting people express their own opinions. He declared that he considered "leaving people free to talk the wind off their stomachs" a good safety valve.⁵⁸ He sarcastically remarked that the Senate had become "a talking circus,"⁵⁹ with every Senator speaking his own mind. When some of his constituents wrote asking his advice about how to handle pro-German elements in their communities, however, Williams replied that the people would take the problem in their own hands. The people could always be trusted to take con-

⁵⁵ Theodore Roosevelt to Williams, April 26, 1918, in Williams Papers. "I think if you come right out and favor it, we may get our two-thirds majority. . . . I will vote to expel any man who lifts up his hand and swears to God allegiance to the American Constitution and then does everything to defeat its ideals and its traditions." Williams to Roosevelt, April 1, 1918, *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Williams to Roosevelt, April 20, 1918, *ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Id.* to Richard L. Jones, February 23, 1918, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Id.* to T. C. Patton, May 2, 1917, *ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Id.* to G. W. Walton, August 14, 1917, *ibid.*

trol of undesirable ones and give them duckings, or cowhidings, or in extreme cases a tarring and feathering.⁶⁰ Such a suggestion from a Senator was dangerous, but in wartime wise men succumb to hysteria along with others. On the other hand, Williams sometimes championed the cause of people who were being persecuted, he thought, under too severe censorship laws and were being denied their rights of free expression.⁶¹

Williams spent the Christmas holidays in 1917 with his daughter Julia in Savannah, Georgia. Their few days together were greatly enjoyed. The Senator wrote to a friend after his return to Washington that his daughter was "as happy as a lark,"⁶² but it turned out that this was the last Christmas they were ever to spend together.

On May 18 Williams requested an indefinite leave of absence from the Senate because Julia was ill.⁶³ Although he was the father of eight children, this daughter was beyond doubt his favorite. Circumstances had thrown the two much together within recent years. Julia had suffered much. She had loved and lost several years before when an anticipated marriage failed to materialize. Later she had been very happily married, but other crises had arisen in her life. It had been necessary for her to undergo several surgical operations. Now she was ill, seriously so, and her father and mother were called to her bedside in North Carolina. To make matters worse her husband, T. Rives Boykin, was also ill.⁶⁴ The daughter was apparently improving when Williams returned to Washington after remaining at her bed-

⁶⁰ *Id.* to J. Sloat Fasset, July 31, 1917, *ibid.*

⁶¹ See especially the case involving Upton Sinclair. Williams to Wilson, March 23, 1918, *ibid.*

⁶² *Id.* to Bertha Schaefer, January 7, 1918, *ibid.*

⁶³ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 2 Sess., 6709.

⁶⁴ Williams to J. O. Walcott, May 16, 1918, in Williams Papers. Among the many letters the Senator received on this occasion was one from his old friend, Thomas Nelson Page. Page had been glad to learn of Julia's happy marriage, for "I felt about her much as I would have felt had one of my own daughters had her life saddened as hers was until it reopened for her." See Page to Williams, March 24, 1917, *ibid.*

side for a month, but on July 6 the Senator received a telegram telling of Julia's death.⁶⁵

Just a few hours before this sad news was received, the father, happy because of his daughter's improvement, had dictated a letter to her, and, as was his custom, he had told his secretary to place it on his private desk so that he could add a few notes which might be of interest to her. The letter was never completed,⁶⁶ but it is now one of the most treasured possessions of "Little Julia," the daughter who was born when the elder Julia died.

Among those expressing profound sympathy was President Wilson. "I have just read in the papers of the death of your daughter and know how your heart must be darkened by such a bereavement. I have been able to realize, if you will let me say so, in my intercourse with you how hard and sincerely you can love and therefore I can form some conception of what this loss must be costing you."⁶⁷

The day after the funeral, the Senator wrote three letters with a pencil. One was to his secretary, J. M. Burlew, in which he said that "Julia died as she had lived, all quietness and sweetness. Betty and I must care for her poor little baby with the same love she would have shown."⁶⁸ The second letter was to the President. During his twenty-five years of public service, the saddened father wrote, he had never been "twenty-five days away from his post of duty." Now, however, he could not get back to the Senate before the recess. He thought that every soldier "not on the firing line owed an explanation to his captain." He would arrange with his Senate pair, Penrose, for his vote to count in favor of every Administration measure.⁶⁹ Such assurance of loyalty during a time of distress was "particularly touch-

⁶⁵ Mrs. Williams to *id.*, July 6, 1918, *ibid.*

⁶⁶ J. M. Burlew to *id.*, July 13, 1918, *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Wilson to Williams, July 8, 1918, quoted in Baker, *Woodrow Wilson*, VIII, 267.

⁶⁸ *Id.* to J. M. Burlew, July 12, 1918, in Williams Papers.

⁶⁹ *Id.* to Wilson, July 12, 1918, *ibid.*

ing" to Wilson.⁷⁰ The third letter was to his dear friend Clay Sharkey.⁷¹

Williams never quite overcame this tragedy. His files reveal letters written months later, in most of which he mentioned his loss. In sending the President a piece of doggerel he stated, "Julia and I used to have the pleasant habit of reading and either commenting upon, amending, improving, or ruining all the doggerel people sent to me."⁷² To another friend he wrote that Teddy Roosevelt "would call a man a weakling to permit his private troubles to interfere with his public duties; but, anyhow, I was built that way."⁷³ Williams was glad when the Senate convened to begin work again.⁷⁴ Writing to a cousin the Senator revealed his faith in immortality. "Of course Julia knows little Julia is with us, . . . everybody 'across the water' knows everything that is of interest to them, . . . they know everything about us except our sins. I think God has been good enough to hide that from them."⁷⁵

Grandmother Williams brought little Julia with her to Washington during the autumn of 1918. She and the Senator stayed that winter at the New Varnum Hotel.⁷⁶ They did not leave Washington during the Christmas vacation because they had "a little baby, a nurse and all the trouble that goes with nurses and babies including milk bottles, washing machines, and everything else."⁷⁷

⁷⁰ Wilson to Williams, July 16, 1918, quoted in Baker, *Woodrow Wilson*, VIII, 282.

⁷¹ Williams to Clay Sharkey, July 12, 1918, in Williams Papers.

⁷² *Id.* to Wilson, September 9, 1918, *ibid.*

⁷³ *Id.* to Stuyvesant Fish, September 14, 1918, *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Id.* to Hamilton E. Reynolds, September 19, 1918, *ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Id.* to Miss Lucile Banks, December 18, 1918, in possession of Miss Banks.

⁷⁶ *Id.* to Mrs. E. D. Harrison, December 13, 1918, in Williams Papers.

⁷⁷ *Id.* to Margaret C. Craig, December 26, 1918, *ibid.*

Chapter XIV

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

WHILE the Senator and Mrs. Williams devotedly cared for their little half-orphan grandchild, and while the gods of war continued their barbaric devastation in the Eastern Hemisphere, we may look into some of the movements for constitutional reforms that swept the United States during this period.

The two outstanding national reforms—prohibition and woman's suffrage—received the attention of Williams on many occasions. Neither was an innovation of the twentieth century; the entrance of the United States into the World War only hastened their culmination into amendments to the Federal Constitution. Prohibition had been the sole issue upon which a party of national dimensions was founded. American suffragettes, although by no means so militant as their sisters in England, had exercised great influence in the councils of the two national parties by the period of the World War. Like many reforms that have resulted in national constitutional amendments, these two ran their course in many states before amendments proposed by Congress were ratified. Consideration of these changes by the branches of the national legislature was long and bitter. Time after time, groups in Congress unsuccessfully tried to enact legislation which would have brought these measures within the scope of the Constitution.

Williams expressed the interests as well as the prejudices of his state and section in these two proposed amendments. Prohibition was inharmonious with the Senator's personal

views. He had fought it within his county from its inception. Many of the country's politicians remained in office because they were riding the growing popularity of the temperance crusade, but Williams was one of the very few in the nation to continue to hold office in spite of expressed opposition. Upon the passage of a prohibition law by the state of Mississippi in 1908, Williams, as the chosen representative of his state in the United States Congress, expressed the views of his constituency. His files contain numerous requests and petitions from various clubs, communities, and counties of Mississippi, urging a national prohibition law. Without exception, these petitions found their way into the *Congressional Record*.

In the closing days of Taft's Administration, Congress passed a bill that prevented the shipping of liquors into those states that had declared for prohibition. This measure found many Republicans standing with the Democratic majority. Taft vetoed the measure because it was, in his opinion, a "violation of the interstate commerce clause of the Constitution." He thought it "in substance and effect a delegation by Congress to the States of the power of regulating commerce in liquors which is vested exclusively in Congress." He was sustained in his views by Attorney General George W. Wickersham.¹ Williams, in voting to override the President's veto, stated that he had as great respect for the Constitution as the President or anyone else. He did not believe, however, that enactment of this law aiding the states to exercise "constitutionally reserved police power" would violate the Constitution. It had always been the custom of English-speaking people to classify lotteries, games, liquor selling, and things of that kind under the police regulation.² Williams' Mississippi colleague, Senator LeRoy Percy, voted against the bill and in favor of sustaining the President's veto.

In a letter to several Mississippians, Williams expressed

¹ *Cong. Record*, 62 Cong., 3 Sess., 4291-92.

² *Ibid.*, 4298.

his views upon the proposed prohibition amendment in clear language. He did not agree that the amendment was wise. It would fail because it was an endeavor to require morality by law: "This is a representative government and it is my duty to represent and not misrepresent my constituents. My constituents are overwhelmingly in favor of the proposed amendment. I shall, therefore, voice their will in speech and vote. I consider it the duty of a representative to represent the will and wishes of the constituents . . . unless he thinks that it will violate the Constitution and therefore violate his oath to maintain the Constitution or else violate some more principles which he is responsible *in foro conscientiae* with God."³ To this policy Williams maintained strict adherence, although against his personal desire.

In the attempt to eradicate the saloon evil from the nation, the members of Congress chose as their first step the abolition of liquor traffic in the District of Columbia. This was in keeping with the first step made in the compromise of 1850 by those who opposed the institution of slavery and slave trade. The passion of devotion which the slavery abolition movement created was somewhat lacking in the temperance crusade. In regard to the prohibition question, Williams adhered successfully to a middle-of-the-road policy. In the pursuit of such an attitude, he was following, not leading, many of the citizens of his state.

On January 15, 1915, Williams made his first extended speech on prohibition.⁴ There was no religious basis for prohibition, he said. The Bible, in many instances, spoke of the use of wine and other intoxicating drinks. Although Mohammedanism did prohibit the use of strong drink, even of wine, the Christian nations were not behind the Mohammedan nations "in civilization or in intellectual ability or industrial progress." Neither the progress of one

³ Williams to R. C. Baillock and others, July 14, 1914, in Williams Papers.

⁴ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 3 Sess., 1625-29.

nor the retardation of the other was caused by the prohibition of intoxicating liquors. In this speech the Senator's views on the duty of a member of the Senate or of the House to express the wish of his constituents was reviewed. When any member of the national Congress could not obey the wishes of the vast majority of his people, "he ought to lay down his office and give it back to them who gave it to him and ask a fresh vote of confidence." The enactment of a prohibition law in Mississippi had done much good, especially among the Negroes. In towns where the people did not want the law enforced, liquor could be secured, but in the country districts, where most of the Negroes lived, the law was enforced very strictly. While the Senator believed as strongly as anyone in permitting people to be tempted to sin in order that they might develop individual powers of resistance, he nevertheless agreed that there must be exceptions to this theory.

Williams was franker than most men, especially men in public life. He confessed that he loved a "toddy almost as well as Daniel Webster or Henry Clay . . . as George Washington or John Marshall ever did." He loved a "glass of wine as much as Shakespeare or Goethe ever did." The day of common sense had arrived, and problems must be dealt with upon that basis. Liquors never did him any good nor brought him anything of material or lasting value. They cheered him and made him feel unusually well for a very short while. No one could contend, regardless of how much he might love intoxicating drink, that "the good that it does in the world is to be held in the slightest comparison with the evil which it does." ⁵ That kind of confession was characterized by a friendly editor as "the sort that is good for the soul." ⁶

The evil results of prohibition were clearly anticipated in this, as well as in other speeches. In a community where the majority of the people were not in favor of the enact-

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1626-27.

⁶ *Jackson Daily News*, January 17, 1915.

ment of the law, it would not be enforced. Instead of an increase in respect for law and a decrease in drunkenness, there would be "only increased lying and perjury and concealment and bad habits of ignoring and defying law." This speech was published in pamphlet form and was widely distributed.⁷

After each defeat, the organizations fostering prohibition renewed their endeavors to secure its enactment by the next Congress. The House of Representatives passed prohibition bills several times before the Senate gave its consent. Williams received letters from several parts of Mississippi urging him to support the bill for prohibition in the District of Columbia.⁸ In reply to one of these requests, the Senator stated that he would support the bill and also aid in the adoption of any amendments which would allow the people of the District of Columbia a right to regulate their own private affairs.⁹

Distillers throughout the country swarmed into Washington and lobbied side by side with the temperance enthusiasts in the legislative corridors, in the offices of politicians, and in the rooms of hotels. Some even went so far as to say that the enactment of this "fanatical theoretical prohibition" legislation would result in a serious and prolonged financial panic.¹⁰ The Senator paid very little, if any, attention to such predictions. He had already stated his opinion privately and publicly.

In the second session of the Sixty-fourth Congress, the Sheppard Prohibition bill was again vexing members of the Senate. Williams lost no time in repeating his views on the floor of the Senate. He had determined to yield personal convictions to the convictions of society. Extremists were invoking "geographical and quantitative" morality when

⁷ Williams to John P. Mayo, May 20, 1915, in Williams Papers.

⁸ See Mrs. Jennie N. Standifer to Williams, January 23, 1916, and other letters in *ibid.*

⁹ Williams to Mrs. Standifer, January 28, 1916, *ibid.*

¹⁰ H. D. Willis and others to Williams, February 2, 1916, *ibid.*

they decreed that it was a felony to sell liquor in states that had enacted prohibition laws and to sell more than a quart to one individual at one time. A third form of morality, dubbed "this-side-or-that-side-of-the-bar" morality, was created when the bill provided that it was a crime to sell strong drink, but not a crime to buy it. Why were these unusual discriminations made? It was easy to point out why a discrimination had been made between the buyer and the seller of liquors. If it had been made a crime to buy liquors, Justices of the Supreme Court would become criminals, august Senators would be incriminated as well as many of the other leaders of Washington officialdom. In reality, stated Williams, there was no crime or sin in either the buying or the selling of intoxicating stimulants. The sin which might lead to crime was in the effect these things had after consumption.

Congress had the power to make such a law for the District of Columbia, Williams continued. It also had the power to refer the proposition to the people of the District and to permit them to vote upon this measure for themselves, thus allowing them to regulate their own private affairs. Williams favored the adoption of an amendment to the proposed bill which would give the people of the District the privilege of deciding for themselves whether or not they wanted such a law enacted. His proposal carried with it three provisions: First, an educational provision would permit only those to vote who could read and write. Second, only those could vote who had paid all taxes to the Federal and District governments. Third, women were to be allowed to vote on this bill. The amendment was discussed at length, but was finally rejected.

The Mississippian had crossed the Rubicon. He wanted the Sheppard bill made stronger and a national prohibition amendment passed immediately. Laws to cover the entire field of the liquor problem should be enacted. He wanted it made a crime to buy or sell liquor in any amounts. If the

problem were faced in that way, people would not believe, as they would in case of an extenuated nibbling process, that the Federal government was going to do away with their personal liberties. To act promptly and conclusively would also prevent the creating of a public frame of mind which would believe that the members of Congress were taking steps to make themselves popular and powerful at home. In respect to the so-called utility of alcohol to the human race for the weeding out of the unfit, the Senator did not believe that physical fitness was the determining factor in the human race. It was a law which was made, not for people, but for the various animals.

Williams hoped to see the experiment of preventing the white race from having any alcohol for any purpose or from sources "except poisoned [wood] alcohol in the arts" tried for a period of ten years. He hoped that prohibition would begin immediately, and that he would be living at the end of the first decade. He could not help repeating his earlier belief that the amendment would prove a failure. The Arabs had tried prohibition, and the Turks had tried it. In neither case had it been of any material benefit.¹¹

Upon this occasion Williams gave public utterance to his decision not to accept any further terms in the United States Senate. His vote on the proposed measure could not politically affect him in any way. A friend asked: "Is your retirement due to the approach of prohibition or is prohibition due to your prospective retirement?"¹² To this inquiry the Senator replied: "Each is the father of the other."¹³

With the beginning of America's entry into the World War in April, 1917, a further incentive was given to the drive for prohibition. Patriotism demanded unlimited sacrifices for the promotion of war. No sooner had American soldiers begun to assemble in camps than there began a

¹¹ *Cong. Record*, 64 Cong., 2 Sess., 487-90.

¹² Fred Sullens to Williams, December 19, 1916, in Williams Papers.

¹³ Williams to Sullens, *ibid.*

clamor for the enactment of a law to prohibit the selling of liquors to soldiers. It was very bad to waste any kind of food for man or beast merely to make something to drink. All such drinks, Williams contended, were luxuries; a stimulating luxury to be sure, but nevertheless a luxury. Although supporting such a movement, Williams, as the father of three sons in the army, stated that if a prohibition law were enacted, he would not hesitate to give his sons, when they were in his home on week ends, a toddy if he had one to share with them.¹⁴

Pressure continued to increase from the highly centralized and propagandized temperance lobbyists in Washington with Senators and Representatives receiving the brunt of the drive. Although Williams sometimes answered the arguments of the extreme prohibitionists on the floor of the Senate, he invariably stated at the very beginning of his remarks that he would vote for any prohibition measure. One day early in 1918 when discussing the rights of soldiers and sailors, he exclaimed amid the laughter of the Senate: "We have to have nation-wide bone-dry prohibition, 'all on account of the war.' " ¹⁵

The saloon had played a unique role in American social life although many people were beginning to look upon it as a public nuisance. As a place where men met and mingled together and discussed many problems, it possessed merits as well as defects. Unfortunately, it was a rendezvous for various kinds of vice. In the enactment of the prohibition amendment millions of dollars' worth of personal property was made useless. Williams pointed out to his colleagues that the United States had absolutely no right, constitutionally or ethically, to take a person's property without due compensation. His vote, however, was not influenced by his personal habit nor by the personal loss to saloon keepers, but by the acceptance of prohibition in Mississippi. This

¹⁴ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 1 Sess., 2192-93.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 65 Cong., 2 Sess., 2911.

statement was made on August 1, 1917, and the resolution submitting the Eighteenth Amendment to the states passed the Senate on the same day.¹⁶

The Eighteenth Amendment gave Congress complete control over the liquor industry. The original resolution, as amended by Penrose, required ratification by the states within seven years. An intimate friend of the Pennsylvania Senator stated that the originator of the amendment anticipated a failure of the national movement as a result of the additional requirement.¹⁷ His anticipations were entirely crushed when all the states save Connecticut and Rhode Island ratified the amendment within a few months. It was declared ratified in January, 1919, and went into effect almost a year later.

Perhaps there were habitual drinkers who did not continue to relish a taste for and a devotion to stimulating beverages, but Williams wished that he had "enough liquor stored away to last me a life time."¹⁸ He did not have any such supply, however, and would have to be satisfied with such as he could secure from various sources from time to time. By February, 1920, he was on the "Mourners Bench," as he had only two quarts and a half left, and was "expecting to be without any within a few days." He was undecided on his future. He did not "know whether to get some good friend and finish what I have left on hand and each shoot the other or to expatriate ourselves and go to France or Cuba."¹⁹ To a constituent the Senator predicted that "after eight or fifteen years the people will get used to doing without whiskey and alcohol and will do just as well without it."²⁰

After the war the promoters of temperance amended the National Prohibition Act to circumscribe the activities of

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 65 Cong., 1 Sess., 5662.

¹⁷ Interview with former Senator James E. Watson, August 5, 1937.

¹⁸ Williams to Walter H. Watkins, January 5, 1918, in Williams Papers.

¹⁹ *Id.* to Hamilton E. Reynolds, February 10, 1919, *ibid.*

²⁰ *Id.* to George A. Thornton, March 18, 1920, *ibid.*

the medical profession in the use of alcohol. Williams urged Congress to leave the use of liquors in the medical profession to the doctors themselves. This profession was peculiarly jealous of its honor—much more so than the legal profession, to which most members of the Senate belonged. Williams thought this law permitted the Federal government to restrict individual rights beyond the powers granted by the Constitution.²¹

Practices which were engaged in by the enforcement officers of the Federal government in the administration of the prohibition act were bitterly denounced by the Senator from Mississippi. When an officer took possession of an individual's baggage without a search warrant because he thought liquor was being carried, his action was not upheld in the legal annals of the country. The mere possession of liquor was not a crime, but only the possession of it for unlawful purposes. When an officer opened a man's valise without a warrant, in Williams' opinion, the man was "perfectly justified in knocking him down, and, if the officer was superior in strength to him and he could not prevent the insult otherwise, shooting him, if he had anything to shoot him with." The Mississippian contended that under no condition was unwarranted search ever justified:

Proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven,
As make the angels weep.²²

While the fight for prohibition was raging, women of the United States were crusading for the right to vote. Whereas the prohibition movement had been confined chiefly to the agricultural states of the South and West, the demand for woman suffrage came chiefly from the West.

²¹ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 1 Sess., 3593-94.

²² *Ibid.*, 4723.

Before his retirement from the House, Williams had given an interview on this "burning question" to a New Orleans woman of letters. It was first published in the *Picayune* of that city, and was quoted by papers in Mississippi and elsewhere in the South. The interview reported Williams as favoring woman suffrage to the degree of wanting ladies to have what they desired. Women always had a right to have what they wanted, and they usually got it. The Senator-elect did not believe that the home would suffer when women entered politics. Two salient points of the interview, which appeared again and again in Williams' expressions upon this issue, were: first, the South had a Negro problem that would have to be solved in connection with woman suffrage; second, he was a party man. A majority of his party as well as a majority of the women must want woman suffrage. When interrogated as to his admiration for the modern woman, Williams replied: "I admire the modern woman when coupled with the old fashioned woman. I think a college education fits a woman for any station in life. I admire a good, kindly, motherly woman. Let her have all the culture she wants."²³

The political campaign of 1912 aided in the growth of national favor for the suffragettes. When Theodore Roosevelt was nominated by the Progressive Convention in Chicago, women sat upon the platform of a national convention for the first time in American history. The "Bull Moose" platform included a plank that advocated the adoption of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. From the fields of political battles the movement found its way to both houses of Congress soon after Wilson's Administration began.

Mrs. Ruth Hanna McCormick, one of the national leaders of the movement, was very much amused as she sat in the Senate gallery and observed the reaction of the various Senators to her hobby. She could understand Williams' op-

²³ New Orleans *Picayune*, October 20, 1908; Jackson *Daily News*, October 22, 1908.

position and adored Borah's earnestness, but lamented his stupidity in asking if the Negro women of the South were to be permitted to vote. She concluded that human nature was pretty nearly the same everywhere, and that any person who wanted to vote for any measure could find an excuse which would meet the criticisms of his constituents. If he did not favor a measure, he could find ample reasoning to justify his stand.²⁴ Mrs. McCormick wrote to Williams a few days later urging the necessity of voting upon the measure immediately after the closing of debate.²⁵

To one of the leaders of this movement, Mrs. Helen H. Gardener-Day, a dear friend of Mr. and Mrs. Williams, the Senator wanted to make himself absolutely clear upon one point. In all his public career he had "never done anything in consequence of threat of punishment or hope of reward held out."²⁶ He could be appealed to sentimentally and rationally, but never through fear.

Williams termed his attitude the middle view. He could not take the laboring oar for woman suffrage nor would he under all conditions oppose woman suffrage. He believed that the reform was "written upon the book of fate." His theory of state rights weighed heavily upon him. The adoption of this amendment would force woman suffrage upon the several states and upon all localities in every state. In some cases local opinion would be defeated by the Anthony Amendment. No Democrat could object, however, to the rule of the majority. So one unfamiliar with the race question, with which politicians in the Lower South had to deal would reason. Williams knew that if he voted for woman suffrage, which granted legally the right to vote to Negro women, his action would be propagandized by demagogues. So he reasoned from a historical background: Had not the Federal government attempted once to interfere with suf-

²⁴ *New York Times*, March 9, 1914.

²⁵ Ruth Hanna McCormick to Williams, March 11, 1914, in *Williams Papers*.

²⁶ Williams to Mrs. Helen H. Gardener [-Day], March 19, 1914, *ibid*.

frage within the states? Had not this attempt caused bitter strife? Had it not proved a failure in a group of states representing one section of the country? He thought it best for the Federal government to profit by its previous mistakes and keep its hands off suffrage in the South.

Williams argued that a different relationship between the sexes existed in his section from that in the West and North. In the rural areas of the South, home life and homemaking occupied a much greater place in the time and attention of the people than those things did in other sections of the country. The farmer and his family were really the seat of local government, "without being incorporated" as such. Like every other government, the family, in its governmental function, required a leader. Sometimes this was the wife, but usually it was the husband. In the South there was an idea in the woman's mind that her husband stood between her and danger, that he was a shield to protect her.²⁷

The debate on the floor of the Senate continued to rage throughout March and into April. Amendments were popular. Vardaman offered one that was tantamount to the repeal of the Fifteenth Amendment, only to have it defeated by a vote of 48 to 19. Time after time during the discussion of the problem, Williams proposed an amendment to add the adjective "white" before the noun "woman." On March 19 it was defeated by a count of 44 to 19. The galleries were packed from day to day, most of the audience being composed of women. "More negroes than usual were present, perhaps in anticipation of the amendments offered by the southern Senators, and some of them were observed to laugh heartily at one of Mr. Williams' remarks at their expense."²⁸ Many Senators were absent or paired on the final vote on the resolution. The *New York Times* believed that Williams' and Vardaman's proposed amendments could only

²⁷ *Id.* to *id.*, March 27, 1914, *ibid.*

²⁸ *New York Times*, March 20, 1914.

be regarded humorously and advised the suffragettes to carry on their fight.²⁹

Time after time the measure was to reappear before the national legislature. Williams declared that the so-called right of suffrage was not a right at all but a privilege "conferred upon the citizen by society in the interest of society." This privilege should expand and grow. It ought not to grow, however, "one whit more than competence and intelligence do."³⁰ To give women the franchise in an evil community would increase misgovernment because the bad majority would be increased. For the same reason, the opposite would be true in a community predominantly composed of good people. Williams had observed that in the West where there was good government, there continued to be good government after the adoption of woman suffrage, and where there had been bad government, there continued to be bad government.³¹ In short, the line of moral demarcation was not the sex line. It was an individual line and had nothing to do with women and men.³²

Mississippi had its woman suffrage association, as did other states. In 1916 it reorganized in an effort to form a more aggressive and militant group. An honest endeavor was made to familiarize the people of the state with the tactics, interests, and progress of the organization through a campaign of publicity in the press. Only through the enactment of a national amendment, one of their articles read, would government "of the people, by the people, and for the people" be realized.³³ Women who wanted to vote were not seeking to run the government, but to acquire genuine democracy.

With the coming of the war the American suffragettes

²⁹ *Ibid.*, March 23, 1914.

³⁰ *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 3 Sess., 753.

³¹ Williams to Mrs. Susie Meek Bolton, August 4, 1914, in Williams Papers.

³² *Id.* to Mrs. Lilley T. Caldwell, October 26, 1918, *ibid.*

³³ Jackson *Daily News*, December 7, 1916.

took on more of the characteristics of their English cousins. They concentrated in increasing numbers in the national capital and brought into play all the wiles of womanhood to win the sympathy of the members of Congress. Public demonstrations were held, of which the most militant perhaps were those held in Lafayette Square. In one of them, forty-eight women, who carried suffragette banners, were arrested.³⁴ Williams was opposed to interference with the demonstrations. It was, he said, wrong because it gave the suffragettes "a chance to play martyrs."³⁵

On the floor of the Senate, Williams admitted that his wife and daughters were just as capable of voting as he or his sons. He did not disqualify women sexually but racially. Turning to the galleries and addressing the many women who were seated there, the Senator continued: If you secure the adoption of this proposed constitutional amendment without the amendment which I propose, "you are doing something which from your own standpoint, nationally and internationally and socially, is stupid."³⁶ Members were resorting to arguments in which they were comparing men with women. They endeavored to prove that women were the equals of, if not the superiors of, men. To Williams it was not a question of superiority. There were differences between the two sexes, but the differences were fixed by Providence.

These remarks were made on September 26, as the Senator made an impassioned plea for the acceptance of his amendment and for the adoption of the resolution. He hoped that Congress would act quickly so that the members could adjourn and go home.³⁷ He, for one, was homesick.

The Senate galleries were jammed with women. Many brought their lunches and knitting along and remained

³⁴ *New York Times*, August 7, 1916. Like most groups in America at that time, the suffragettes cast the blame for the failure of their measure upon the President of the United States.

³⁵ Williams to Robert R. Reed, June 30, 1917, in Williams Papers.

³⁶ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 2 Sess., 8346.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 10,790-91.

throughout the day as the debate continued to rage in the political arena below them. Telephone and telegraph wires were kept busy by leaders of both sides trying to secure the presence of absent members. The debate was focused presently upon the amendment of the senior Senator from Mississippi. His colleague, Vardaman, spoke ardently in support of the Williams Amendment.³⁸

Some of the sweetest women Williams had ever known were urging him to vote for woman suffrage. It was "an awful job to refuse them,"³⁹ but he was determined not to yield until white supremacy in Mississippi was further guaranteed by the adoption of his amendment. The debate in the Senate continued until October 1. The joint resolution, although passing by a vote of 53 to 31, failed to secure a two-thirds majority.⁴⁰ Williams made plea after plea, urging his view upon the Senators. In one such eloquent plea, the Senator stated:

"There is just one thing that I love better than the Democratic Party; there is one thing that I love better than the United States; there is just one thing that I love better than I do my wife or children or myself, and that is the hope of the purity and the integrity and the supremacy of the white race everywhere, but . . . especially in my own native State."⁴¹

Williams was successful in lining up the southern Senators for his amendment, and thus causing the defeat of the proposed Anthony Amendment. According to a leading Mississippi paper, it was a "master effort to aid the whites" of the Lower South.⁴² He spoke for "the old South, with its honorable traditions and the new South with its ambitions

³⁸ *New York Times*, September 27, 1918.

³⁹ Williams to Miss Lucile Banks, May 16, 1918, in possession of Miss Banks.

⁴⁰ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 2 Sess., 10,987-88.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 10,981. Williams was born in Tennessee, but certainly must have had in mind his adopted state, Mississippi.

⁴² *Jackson Daily News*, October 6, 1918.

and its problems.”⁴³ The President attempted to secure the passage of this legislation by writing personal notes to a number of the Senators.⁴⁴ Williams answered and admitted his love for Wilson personally, but could not conscientiously agree with him that the legislation was necessary. The Mississippian was willing to leave the resolution in the lap of the gods, believing that, as God ruled the world, whatever happened in the long run would be all right. The defeat of the bill was characterized by Miss Alice Paul, one of the leading suffragettes, as “only temporary.”⁴⁵

Clay Sharkey, one of the best friends Williams ever had, wrote him a letter disagreeing with his stand. This letter, with a message from the Senator, was sent to the White House.⁴⁶ Williams knew that Wilson would enjoy seeing such a letter. The President was “very much grieved” that the Senator refused to respond to an appeal for woman suffrage. He advanced an international aspect of the question when he said that he knew what he was talking about when he “spoke of the moral effect it would have on the other side of the water.”⁴⁷

With the election of 1918 going against the Democratic party, much pressure was brought to bear upon Williams and the other opposing Senators in an endeavor to whip them into line for the amendment before the Republicans came into control of Congress after March, 1919. The President revealed his deep concern over the situation to Williams. He felt very keenly the impression that was likely to circulate throughout the country that the Democratic party had prevented the adoption of the amendment. Wilson found Williams to be “so frank a friend and always so thorough a sport” that he took the liberty of asking the Mississippian if it were possible for him to render his aid in the passage of the amendment. The President would be

⁴³ *Ibid.*, October 7, 1918.

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, August 7, 1918.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, October 2, 1918.

⁴⁶ Williams to Wilson, October 10, 1918, in Williams Papers.

⁴⁷ Wilson to Williams, October 15, 1918, *ibid.*

very gratified, because it was a matter of great anxiety to him.⁴⁸ Other letters came from the White House to Williams. In reply to one, he showed his lack of a conciliatory spirit when he said "there are none so deaf as those who will not hear and none so blind as those who will not see."⁴⁹

The President, from the American headquarters in Paris where he had gone to participate in the international peace conference, sent a cablegram to Williams in which he expressed the hope that a new survey of the situation in the United States might convince the Senator of the wisdom of passing the suffrage amendment.⁵⁰ "Not as long," cabled Williams in return, "as they keep up their infantile and asinine bonfire performance in Lafayette Park."⁵¹

In February, 1919, twenty-five prominent Democratic Senators bound themselves together in an endeavor to secure the votes of those colleagues, chiefly from the South, who continued to oppose the enactment of the measure. A vote during the preceding year had shown that a change of two votes in the Senate would have ensured the adoption of the suffrage resolution. In the November elections in Massachusetts, Delaware, and Georgia, three Senators had been defeated by candidates who warmly advocated the resolution. The Republican Senators had determined in caucus to support the measure. Twenty-one states, through their legislatures, had endorsed the amendment in resolutions sent to the Senate since the beginning of Congress in the preceding December. If the measure failed, of course the Democratic party would rightly bear the brunt of the blame.⁵² Williams was urged to cast his vote with the twenty-five who had signed the letter. Pressure from the White House had not ceased. In vain had the President, "in private conversation once, by letter twice and by cable once,"

⁴⁸ *Id. to id.*, November 9, 1918, *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Williams to Tumulty, December 9, 1918, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Wilson to Williams, January 15, 1919, *ibid.*

⁵¹ Williams to Wilson, January 15, 1919, *ibid.*

⁵² Key Pittman and others to Williams, February 3, 1919, *ibid.*

begged Senator Williams to vote for woman suffrage.⁵³

It proved impossible to secure the legislation before the Republicans came into control of the Senate. With them in control, the long battle came to a close. The women won what they wanted. America had just concluded a fight for world democracy, and it was "inexcusable for any state to neglect democracy at home."⁵⁴ Once Congress had succeeded in ratifying the Anthony Amendment, the Democrats became very anxious to secure the ratification by the required thirty-six states before the presidential election of 1920. It must be "ratified in time for the women to vote." Williams was urged to use his influence to secure ratification in his home state.⁵⁵

The plan for the ratification of the amendment by the Mississippi legislature, as concocted by Williams, called for the preparation and enactment of all suffrage laws before the amendment was ratified. The program was as follows: first, the same qualifications for woman suffrage as for manhood suffrage; second, the fixing of a poll tax upon women as upon men; third, "in order to avoid negro rule, it might be advisable to disqualify habitual prostitutes."⁵⁶ The third part of this program was hardly worthy of its author, his position, or his caliber of statesmanship.

The Susan B. Anthony Amendment—it was the Nineteenth Amendment—became a part of the Constitution in August, 1920. Women, for the most part, worked within the organization of the two major parties and practically lost their identity in political organizations dominated by men. They were successful, however, in the early 1920's in organizing a Voting Woman's Congressional Committee, which became influential in the enactment of laws involving problems of social conditions.

⁵³ Williams to Alice H. Wadsworth, February 20, 1919, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Jackson *Daily News*, December 19, 1919.

⁵⁵ Gilbert M. Hitchcock to Williams, January 12, 1920, in Williams Papers.

⁵⁶ Williams to Hitchcock, January 12, 1920, *ibid.*

Chapter XV

"MY PASSION IS PEACE"

FOR a number of years Williams had been taking an active part in the movement to place international peace upon a more sound foundation. He was appointed a delegate at large to the World Court Congress, held in Cleveland, Ohio, May 12-14, 1915.¹ He did not accept this appointment because it was impossible for him to attend, but he expressed "heartly sympathy for the inauguration of a court, which should constitute a sort of amphictyonic council of the civilized nations of the world." Such a scheme, he believed, was not only practicable but worthy of the best efforts of the leaders of that period. The Senator realized that individual states might object to an international organization's holding such powers, but hoped that it could be managed "so as to avoid any real menace to international sovereignty or independence and still at the same time conserve the peace of the world." Such matters of detail would be worked out in "God's own good time" in such a way as to conserve "national sovereignty and national independence and traditional policies."²

Williams always urged that force be granted to any international organization for peace. "The League of Peace to be worth anything would have to have behind it some form of coercion." He wanted the great maritime powers to sign a treaty among themselves, agreeing to demand arbitration in the disputes of all nations. Those nations not complying with the requests were to be ostracized commercially. As a

¹ John Hays Hammond to Williams, April 22, 1915, in Williams Papers.

² Williams to Hammond, April 29, 1915, *ibid.*

last resort, military compulsion was to be invoked. When a nation refused to arbitrate any question “except its own sovereignty, or independence, or some great policy upon which its sovereignty or independence depended it should be regarded as the common enemy of the balance of the world.”³

The League to Enforce Peace, through former President Taft, requested of Williams a statement of his views on peace, to be printed with similar views of other Americans in a pamphlet that was to be freely distributed throughout the country.⁴ In his reply, the Senator went more into detail in regard to his advocated organization among the maritime powers. The nations entering into the agreement must control the high seas. Those suggested for membership in this international council were Great Britain, France, Japan, Germany, Russia, Italy, and the United States. If only the United States, Great Britain, and Japan entered into such an agreement, it would prove successful, as these nations controlled the seas. Any nation going to war without arbitration would be regarded as “beyond the pale of civilization.” Commercial and personal intercourse were to be cut off from any nation that had taken such a policy. It was to be allowed to travel upon the high seas only to the three-mile limit of its coast line. The essential point was to promote an international organization that would “cut off from intercourse with the civilized world any nation which confessed itself barbarian by refusing arbitration.”⁵

In the great debate that raged in the United States during the period of the war, and especially in the months following its close, Williams did more than his share of talking. After the midsummer of 1918 he was often very bitter in replying to an adversary. Like many others he permitted

³ *Id.* to Augustus J. Cadwalader, June 2, 1915, *ibid.*

⁴ William H. Taft to Williams, September 9, 1916, *ibid.* For an able account of Taft's action in the League to Enforce Peace, see Pringle, *William Howard Taft*, II, 928-39.

⁵ Williams to Taft, November 9, 1916, *ibid.*

himself to become seriously afflicted with war hysteria. Besides, he was approaching old age.

In May, 1917, the Senator admitted to a friend that he was getting too old to enjoy life. He was "suffering with a bad case of *Anno Domini*; toddies don't taste good to me like they used to; cigar flavor is not what it once was. I still enjoy poetry and flowers and I enjoy my public life while the excitement and fight is on, but I have reached the point of life when it bores me when the excitement and fight are off. . . . God and my fellow men have been exceedingly kind to me. It is not of the world that I am tired . . . , but of myself because I cannot enjoy the world as much as I want to." ⁶ This frank confession is perhaps the key to the atmosphere that enshrouded the Senator during the remainder of his political life. His boredom with public life was obviously one cause of his indulging in heated exchanges on the floor of the Senate in such an unprecedented way. The loss of Julia, his beloved daughter, no doubt influenced him to aggressiveness in order to forget his deep personal grief. He drank more than formerly. Although never drunk while on official duty in the Senate, he was influenced by liquor to make many personal and bitter statements.

It seemed that everyone in America who was familiar with the history and conditions of Europe, and many who had no thorough knowledge of the background, were offering for publication terms which the United States should demand at the conclusion of the war. Williams' proposals, presented soon after America entered the war, were practically the same as those he offered later. Their nature was perhaps different from the majority of other suggestions because he was among those who hoped that no spirit of hatred or revenge would permeate the peace conference. "God grant there may be none," he said, "because . . . we want to have a 'just and durable peace,' because a peace dictated by victors in a spirit of hatred is never just and is

⁶ *Id.* to R. S. Holt, May 9, 1917, *ibid.*

seldom durable.” America did not want to crush Germany. She wanted only to defeat the system under which Germany was then laboring. Germany had been a menace to the civilized world because she was dominated by an autocratic militaristic system.

If the Senator could have dictated the terms of peace in July, 1917, provisions would have included the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France and of Schleswig-Holstein to Denmark. Bosnia would have been allowed to form a government with her Serbian kinsmen and Herzegovina with her Montenegrin kindred. The Bohemians and Magyars would have been freed from Hapsburg rule. The Roumanians in Transylvania would have been freed. Poland would have been recreated into an independent state. Belgium would have been restored and Luxemburg would have been freed from German rule. The people in all these countries would have been given the opportunity through a democratic election to decide whether or not they wanted to remain under the allegiance of the country where they were or to make the move Williams advocated.⁷ The Mississippiian enlarged upon these demands before the Senate from time to time.

On August 1, 1917, the Pope sent “peace feelers” to the various belligerent nations. This communication “carried with it certain definite proposals.” Wilson replied to this peace offer on August 27. No peace could promise durability when it rested on “political or economic restrictions meant to benefit some nations and cripple and embarrass others, upon vindictive action of any sort, or any kind of revenge or deliberate injury.” He emphasized the fact the American people sought “no material advantage of any kind.”⁸ This note was characterized by Williams as “one of the best papers ever offered to the world.” The Senator believed it subject to criticism in that the President “went very far

⁷ Williams, “‘War to Stop War,’” in *loc. cit.*, 182-83.

⁸ Baker and Dodd (eds.), *Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, V, 95.

against any punitive measures"; he thought it would be a mistake if Germany were not compelled to pay for damages and for her atrocities to Belgium. But he considered the spirit of the President's reply and the literary construction of it beyond criticism.⁹ The President was "greatly delighted" that Williams thought so well of his message to the Pope.¹⁰

Although complimenting Wilson on his reply to the papal message, the Senator thought peace was a mistaken policy for the United States until Germany begged for it. Williams would not admit that the Pope had any right to represent Germany. Taking his cue from the President's reply to the Pope, Williams wrote a friend that "militarism . . . in Germany must simply be torn up by the roots." If this were accomplished by the German people, it would not have to be done by the Allied armies. To leave Germany with a military machine would mean that she would immediately prepare for another war; England and America would have to maintain "an equal military establishment to prevent her from being successful."¹¹

Wilson's Fourteen Points were first set before Congress as a program for peace on January 8, 1918. No student of history now maintains that Wilson alone originated this plan nor that this was the first occasion on which he had given utterance to some of these prerequisites of peace. This fourteen-point program represented the accumulated advice of a number of people. Williams thought the President's message was the best thing the latter had done, and added that he was saying a good deal because the President had "done some devilish good things of that sort."¹²

On May 17, at a session of the League to Enforce Peace, over which former President Taft presided, Williams delivered an address on the subject, "What Is the Only Peace Worth Having?" "A peace which is a peace" was character-

⁹ Williams to Wilson, August 29, 1917, in Williams Papers.

¹⁰ Wilson to Williams, August 30, 1917, *ibid.*

¹¹ Williams to Stewart E. Bruce, January 22, 1918, *ibid.*

¹² *Id.* to Wilson, January 9, 1918, *ibid.*

ized as possessing: first, justice; second, generosity; third, democracy; fourth, promise of permanency. In order to meet these requirements, people must remove present conditions of war, the temptation of world-wide armament which fostered war, and all future recourse to new and barbarous expedients. The Senator enlarged upon his terms of peace that had been publicized almost a year earlier. He made one notable addition to his earlier proposals—there must be “a Sanction—really a penalty—ultimately force behind the treaty.” This force was to be administered by a League of Nations. Our peace terms were those of God—“The God of justice and love, who being ‘no respecter of persons,’ is also the God of human equality and fraternity and freedom.”¹³

The address was interesting to Theodore Roosevelt. He was in “substantial and hearty accord” with it all, except “some reservations about the disarmament portion of it.”¹⁴ Williams was convinced that Americans should not be taxed during periods of peace in order to keep a fighting military machine in well-oiled condition. He chose rather to “muddle through” in war and to continue the usual manner in which a democracy lived when at peace.

During the spring and summer of 1918, Germany launched her concluding drives of the war. With the checking of these onslaughts, the Allied Powers were able to initiate counterattacks which carried them by autumn far into Germany’s conquered territory. While military action continued unabated in Europe, Americans were generous in their advice to the President of the United States. The senior Senator from Mississippi was foremost among these advisers.

Williams was opposed to Taft’s expressed idea of encouraging Japan to strike at Germany through Siberia and Russia. The distance was too great, and the time required

¹³ From the manuscript in Williams Papers. Published in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, May 18, 1918, and *Jackson Daily News*, May 19, 1918.

¹⁴ Theodore Roosevelt to Williams, May 18, 1918, in Williams Papers.

was too long for carrying out the plan successfully. He felt that Germany should be attacked through the Balkans and through Austria, that we should persuade Japan to land an army of half a million men in Italy and drive against Austria from that position. If Japan needed any indemnity for this assistance, Williams recommended granting to her several of the Philippine Islands nearest to the Japanese Empire. An even better position for Japanese troops to land was near Salonika, where, by marching in a northerly direction, they could attack Austria through Hungary. Either of these attacks, the Senator believed, would necessitate the withdrawal of German troops from the Western Front, and would relieve pressure that Germany was exerting on the northwestern sector. If the President did not see fit to trade with Japan in regard to a part of the Philippine archipelago, Williams thought it would be an excellent idea for the United States to assume the financial responsibility incurred by Japan in placing her army in Italy or in the Balkans. The Senator was willing to make this agreement with Japan secretly. "Of course the time for secret alliances and all that sort of thing in preparation for war is past; but the time for quick, decisive, and if necessary, secret agreement is here."¹⁵ The American people could be relied upon to support whatever action was taken if it succeeded in winning the war. Williams and Roosevelt were "nearly completely in accord" with each other on the Balkan and Austrian questions.¹⁶ Sometime later, the Senator sent further elaborate expressions of his views on this subject to the White House. But the President explained that they were leaving all military matters to Foch.¹⁷

¹⁵ Williams to Wilson, June 21, 1918, *ibid.* Williams sent this interesting message directly to Tumulty as he did not want any of the regular office force to see it.

¹⁶ Roosevelt to Williams, June 18, 1918; Williams to Roosevelt, June 24, 1918, *ibid.*

¹⁷ *Id.* to Wilson, October 21, 1918; Wilson to Williams, October 24, 1918, *ibid.*

On October 12 the German government signified its willingness to accept Wilson's proposals. Two days later the President gave the Central Powers the conditions upon which he would be willing to grant an armistice to them. The President's note was nothing less than Williams had expected. It was satisfactory in every respect. Even Lodge was quoted to have been "very glad and genuinely pleased."¹⁸

On the same day that the President sent his conditions-of-peace note to the German government, Williams made a long speech on the peace proposals to the Central Powers, stating the conditions that should precede the granting of the terms of an armistice to Germany. The armistice must be a dictated one. The enemy must be told: "Drop your arms, *drop them where you are.*" Germany must give guarantees that the armistice period would not be used for reorganizing her military machine. The Allies must be allowed to occupy Essen, Mannheim, and economically strategic points in Westphalia. The enemy must evacuate all invaded territory, including Alsace-Lorraine and *Italia irredenta*. The Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs would have to abdicate. For the time being, there should be a delay in sending further notes in order that the enemy population may "sizzle in their own grease." A plebiscite of the German people on the acceptance of the peace terms must be arranged.¹⁹ In order to secure all these conditions, followed by an equitable armistice and a negotiable treaty, the Senator was willing to place the utmost confidence in Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau.

Upon the conclusion of this speech, the Senator went back to the Senate Office Building and dictated a letter in which he repeated to the President his conclusion that the people of the Central Powers should be allowed to "sizzle in their own grease." Wilson would necessarily have to get

¹⁸ New York Times, October 15, 1918.

¹⁹ Cong. Record, 65 Cong., 2 Sess., 11,217-19.

in touch with the other Allied governments before he could act. While he was exchanging views with other governments, he should, according to Williams, send a private cipher telegram to Foch or Pershing to "push the fighting" to the utmost. Williams good-naturedly remarked that he held membership in the "Grand Army of Framers of Presidential Conduct."²⁰ The President replied that the advantage of keeping the Central Powers in doubt relative to our course of action had presented itself to his mind. It was one of the reasons why he had not answered notes from Austria and Turkey.²¹

No doubt Wilson was giving most serious consideration to the personnel of America's representation at the peace conference. Williams confessed that he would like very much to be one of the American delegates to the conference, but added that he had no idea of being chosen. He was certainly not going to impose upon his friendship for the President by asking to go. This desire on William's part was rather short-lived, for a few weeks later he had definitely decided that he had no ambition to make the trip and would probably refuse if the invitation were extended to him.²² Taft, in Williams' opinion, would be an excellent and safe man to be taken with the delegation,²³ but the President had other ideas.

When Wilson determined to head the American peace delegation, many people thought he showed unlimited self-confidence. To Williams, however, the President often revealed distrust of his own insight.²⁴ The Senator believed the President to have not only "the capacity to arrive at just

²⁰ Williams to Wilson, October 14, 1918, in Williams Papers.

²¹ Wilson to Williams, October 17, 1918, *ibid.* Although Wilson did not say so, the immediate recognition of the Czechoslovaks and the official encouragement of the Jugoslavs since the President's peace message of January had necessitated changing the terms which America must necessarily offer to Austria-Hungary.

²² Williams to Samuel A. Neville, November 23, 1918, *ibid.*

²³ *Id.* to Clay Sharkey, June 25, 1918, *ibid.*

²⁴ See Wilson to Williams, October 18, 1918, and other letters in *ibid.*

conclusions by reasoning, but a rare capacity to arrive at many of them by intuition." ²⁵

Having witnessed the collapse of the Central Powers, Congress wearily adjourned for a brief vacation. This recess was soon ended, but Williams wanted to "play hookey." He had made arrangements with his senatorial pair, and wrote to the President of his desire to remain in Mississippi. ²⁶ His health had not been very good, and he did not feel equal to the return trip.

From Cedar Grove letters traveled every day to the White House, to members of the President's Cabinet, and other officials of state in Washington. In a penciled letter the President was "advised" what to do in regard to world indemnities and reparations. Germany and the other Central Powers should be made to pay for the damage done in territories which they had overrun and conquered. As soon as possible Germany "*a la Militaire*" should be driven out of Russia. ²⁷ Williams' fullest sympathies were with the Russian people in their struggle "for government and liberty." He was much gratified that they had "shaken off the shackles of tradition and time." ²⁸ The Secretary of War was questioned as to the practicability of deflecting troops from Italy and France to crush the Bolsheviks themselves. The Senator and Theodore Roosevelt were in agreement that "Bolsheviks are fully as dangerous to civilization, general Democracy and the peace of the world as ever Junkers were or could have been." ²⁹ The President wrote that it "would

²⁵ Williams to Wilson, October 21, 1918, *ibid.*

²⁶ *Id.* to F. M. Simmons, November 20, 1918; *id.* to Wilson, November 21, 1918, *ibid.*

²⁷ *Id.* to *id.*, November 22, 1918, *ibid.*

²⁸ *Id.* to Hugh S. Martin, August 20, 1918, *ibid.* As early as March, 1917, Williams had welcomed the coming of democracy to Russia. See Williams, "Ties That Bind," in *loc. cit.*, 281-86. In August, 1917, Williams had advised an expeditionary force to Russia and asked Major General William C. Gorgas to decide upon a suitable person to head the forces if they were sent. Williams to William C. Gorgas, August 29, 1917, in Williams Papers.

²⁹ *Id.* to Newton D. Baker, November 22, 1918, *ibid.* This letter was written with a pencil.

be delightful" to have a chat with Williams before sailing for Europe,³⁰ and the Senator returned to Washington for the opening of Congress on December 2.

When Congress opened, the Republicans were ready for a fight with Wilson. As the President left for Europe, those who sought to destroy his political future in the United States and his position of world leadership were hoping to place Vice-President Marshall in the White House as the official head of the government during the President's absence. On December 3 Lawrence Y. Sherman of Illinois made some remarks derogatory to Wilson's going to Europe in order to attend the peace conference, and introduced a resolution declaring the Presidency vacant. Williams interrupted the speaker several times. When Sherman concluded, Williams delivered a long speech in explanation of the action about to be taken by Wilson. He argued that it was impossible for the Chief Executive to be replaced while he was abroad. Had not Taft while President visited Canada and Mexico? Had not Roosevelt while occupying the White House visited cities in the Republic of Panama other than in the Panama Canal Zone? No Democrat had ever raised a question of unconstitutionality when a Republican President had journeyed abroad. The Constitution stated nothing about temporary or permanent vacations of the Chief Executive. Was it not much better for Wilson to go abroad, where he could talk with the various military and political leaders of the countries of Europe, than to remain in Washington and write notes through his State Department? Some Senators objected because the Senate had been given no information in regard to the day by day negotiations. Williams was satisfied that when important progress was made in the peace conferences, the President would notify the United States Senate of the conclusions that had been reached. It would be impossible for Wilson to go into details of the long-drawn-out conferences of organization and

³⁰ Wilson to Williams, November 27, 1918, *ibid.*

negotiations in each case. The Republicans, so stated Williams, were angry at Wilson because, just previous to the Congressional election, he had asked the American people to elect Democratic Representatives and Senators. The request was not an innovation for an American President. Every occupant of the White House wished to have members in Congress who would support him and co-operate with him in his efforts to carry out a domestic or foreign program. The President lent his aid to the defeat of some Democrats who were up for re-election because they had not been loyal to the Administration in its war policy. Although the Republicans might criticize the President in every way, there was not one of them who could confess to himself and his God at night in the quietness by his bedside that Woodrow Wilson was ever unpatriotic or dishonest.³¹ The debate continued for two more days, with many leaders on both sides of the Chamber participating but with no unanimity of opinion resulting.

With some form of international organization, Williams felt that civilization would be enlightened; without it civilization would be endangered, if not destroyed. Senator Reed of Missouri irked Williams by asking if he would be willing to submit the Monroe Doctrine to an international court, the majority of which would consist of Europeans? The latter answered that if what he had in mind was brought about, there would be no necessity for a Monroe Doctrine. The principles involved in that doctrine would become world-wide. There would be no further political expansion of any government into other territories without the consent of the smaller powers and people. The very basis of

³¹ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 3 Sess., 24-31. It was during this long debate that Jim Watson walked up to his Republican colleague, Sherman, who was hard of hearing, and spoke into Sherman's good ear: "Lawrence, you seem to be having a pretty hard time here." The member from Illinois, very much enraged because of the fiery words of the Mississippian, many of which he could not understand, turned to Watson and replied: "Yes, Williams and I are having a hell of a debate. Neither of us hears a word the other fellow says and neither of us gives a damn." See Watson, *As I Knew Them*, 288.

the proposition Williams believed to be one of psychology. It was only necessary to secure enough people to *will* to have international peace, and international peace *would* result.³² On the eve of the peace conference, Williams spoke in "words that the whole American people ought to remember." He recognized that the fundamental condition of the success of any international league was an expression of concord between the British Empire and the United States. This collaboration was one thing which Wilson sought in his trip to Europe. On such an errand the President should have had the "full sympathy of all Americans who have studied world politics."³³

Williams deprecated the doctrine that patriotism, loyalty, and nationalism demanded that the American nation be the sole judge of all international controversies. He would see no difference in the law of ethics when applied to an individual or to a nation. If a national state wanted to be given complete control of all its controversies, local government would cease. Was not the American union of states a living example that no nation need give up its sovereignty to become a member of an international union? Had not American states, North Carolina and others, asserted in the early dawn of an American centralized government that they would not come into any union because it would mean a loss of sovereignty?³⁴ The twentieth-century nationalists must learn a lesson from the eighteenth-century American states.

During the months when the President was abroad attending the peace conference, making speeches throughout Europe, and holding secret conversations with the leading statesmen of the Allied Powers, some of the leaders left behind in the United States were busy in the halls of the national Capitol bitterly denouncing his efforts. Members

³² *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 3 Sess., 84-91.

³³ *New York Times*, December 5, 1918.

³⁴ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 3 Sess., 197-99.

of the Senate were excusing themselves from many roll calls, their explanation being given to the clerk as absent on “official business.” The “business” which called them from the Senate was speechmaking throughout the country in opposition to the forthcoming peace treaty. Wilson knew that many of the words of condemnation spoken at home would throw obstacles in the way of the peace negotiations abroad. The President was more and more convinced that the League of Nations was the “only clue to a labyrinth in which, without it, danger of every kind would lurk and develop.” He felt greatly strengthened by Williams’ support and by his vision.³⁵

On February 15 Williams delivered a lengthy speech in answer to attacks on Wilson and criticisms of the Democratic Administration.³⁶ Within a few hours, the President cabled the Senator from Paris that the committee drafting the Covenant of the League of Nations had concluded its work the preceding night. It was to be the President’s privilege before leaving that afternoon for the United States, to read, before the plenary session, the twenty-six articles agreed upon by the League of Nations Committee. Wilson wished to go over with Williams, article by article, the Covenant of the League before it came up for debate in Congress. In anticipation of such a conference, the President requested that after his own return Williams dine with him at their earliest convenience.³⁷ Similar invitations were sent to other members of the Foreign Relations Committee

³⁵ Wilson to Williams, January 13, 1919, in Williams Papers.

³⁶ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 3 Sess., 3440-42. A resolution had been introduced which provided for the creation of six Joint Congressional Committees of Reconstruction. With the creation of these committees, the then standing committees of the Congress would have been deprived of most of their jurisdiction as the former were to be given control over problems which ordinarily were handled by the latter. Personal ambition caused some of the Senators to seek chairmanships of these joint committees; “self-appointed leaders,” they were styled by Williams. The Senator classified the Republican Representatives and Senators with the Bolsheviks, and the asinine female bonfire burners in Lafayette Square as presidential critics.

³⁷ Wilson to Williams, February 14, 1919, in Williams Papers.

of the Senate and to the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House. Williams accepted the invitation upon condition that his health, which lately had not been at its best, should continue to improve.³⁸

The public announcement that the President was returning and had requested that the members of Congress refrain from further discussion of the League until after he had conferred with the members of the House and Senate committees, brought forth various comments from the members of Congress. The League was "a great step in the advancement of civilization," stated Senator Atlee Pomerene. William H. King of Utah did not believe that the American people were going to "abandon the Monroe Doctrine. They never are going to abdicate any of their sovereign rights." Joseph T. Robinson clearly analyzed the situation when he said that the proposed League of Nations was "in the nature of an experiment." Vardaman, who because of his defeat for re-election was in the closing days of his senatorial career, sarcastically remarked that "the President is coming home well pleased with his little gold rattle."³⁹ At about the same time, Williams wrote privately: "This is the first time in the history of the American Republic when commissioners to create peace have been super criticized . . . calumniated—even in advance of their work."⁴⁰ There were some grounds for criticism perhaps when the President, before taking the Congressional committees into his confidence, delivered a speech to a large audience in Boston.

Everyone knew that there was to be a bitter fight in the Senate over the ratification of the treaty. The giants of debate were lining up for the struggle which promised to be one of the most memorable in the history of this nation. Williams, as one of the leading members in the Senate, and

³⁸ Williams to Joseph P. Tumulty, February 17, 1919, *ibid.*

³⁹ New York *Times*, February 16, 1919.

⁴⁰ Williams to Samuel Colcord, March 1, 1919, in Williams Papers.

as one in complete agreement with the President, was sure to play his part in the heated controversy.

An odd division of public opinion occurred in the United States as a result of the League fight. Taft, who was making a tour of the West in defense of the League of Nations, had been “much embarrassed by misquotations in the press” of what he had said on the platform.⁴¹ It was rather unusual for a former Republican President to send his speeches to a rock-ribbed Democratic Senator from the Lower South in order to secure a correct reproduction of them in print. But this is exactly what occurred. Williams placed in the *Record* several speeches which Taft had made on his western trip.⁴²

Williams became prolific in inserting the speeches of League enthusiasts into the *Record*. Sometimes Senator Smoot, a League critic, hesitated to permit the use of the *Record* by Williams to print such material.⁴³

“Mr. Smoot. ‘Is that the only article desired to be inserted by the Senator from Mississippi?’

“Mr. Williams. ‘No. My genial friend from Utah has asked me if that is the only one I have got. I have another, entitled “No legs to stand on.” ’

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“Mr. Williams. ‘Has my request been granted?’

“The Presiding Officer. ‘It has been granted.’

“Mr. Williams. ‘Very well. Then I do not care whether the Senator from Utah is tired of it or not.’

“Mr. Smoot. ‘I said I thought the Senator would get tired of it.’

“Mr. Williams. ‘No; the Senator will never get tired of

⁴¹ William H. Taft to Williams, February 21, 1919, *ibid.* President Taft's work in behalf of the League of Nations is related in Pringle, *William Howard Taft*, II, 939-50.

⁴² *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 3 Sess., 3538-4108.

⁴³ Williams to Louis F. Post, September 2, 1919, in Williams Papers.

inserting material in the *Record* for the information of the Senator from Utah.'

"Mr. Smoot. 'The Senator from Utah will say that if such articles go into the *Record* after the appropriation bills are out of the way the Senator from Mississippi will read them into the Record. . . .'

"Mr. Williams. 'I do not care particularly about the threats the Senator from Utah may make as to what he will do in the future. All I care about is the present accomplishment of my purpose.' " ⁴⁴

At that time Williams was physically unable to engage in heated debates. The "tooth carpenter" for several days had been trying to assassinate him. As a result, he could hardly talk. He would have to wait until there could be some new teeth to replace those that had been extracted.⁴⁵ Taft heard of Williams' illness and hoped that he would soon recover.⁴⁶

Professor Denna F. Fleming has treated the League in a singular way in his *The United States and the League of Nations, 1918-1920*. Senator Henry C. Lodge has given his personal review of the problem in his *The Senate and the League of Nations*. Others have written upon various phases of the part that the Senate, as a unit, and a few individual members, played in the rejection of the League of Nations Covenant. Instead of going into a discussion of the whole treaty problem as it confronted the Senate during the years 1919-1920, in which Williams would be partially lost sight of, the story will be told here largely from the Senator's files, in the hope that some new light may be shed on the contest.

Near the end of the Sixty-fifth Congress, Williams informed an Easterner that "Neither you nor any one else can urge me to use my 'talents' to defeat the League of Nations. . . . Nothing in the League of Nations attacks either

⁴⁴ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 1 Sess., 1554.

⁴⁵ Williams to A. V. Snell, March 3, 1919, in Williams Papers.

⁴⁶ William H. Taft to Williams, February 21, 1919, *ibid.*

the Monroe Doctrine, the Sovereignty of the United States or the capacity to control ourselves as a sovereignty.” He would never accept any “do as you damn please” theory in international relations. The Senator had no difficulty in being a citizen of Yazoo County, the State of Mississippi, and the United States at the same time. He would have no trouble in the future adding another citizenship, that of the League of Nations.⁴⁷

Congress adjourned on March 4, 1919, and reconvened on May 21 in special session to receive a cabled message from President Wilson. In the Senate the Republicans, including La Follette and Truman H. Newberry, had a majority of two, and acquired the chairmanship of all committees. Lodge became chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. The Republicans had given indication enough of their determination to treat the League of Nations question in a partisan way. A further guarantee of this determination was shown in the membership of the committee over which Lodge presided. This committee was “stacked” against the League of Nations.⁴⁸

On March 4 a resolution containing the names of thirty-nine Senators had been presented to the Senate advising against the acceptance of the League of Nations proposal unless it contained “reservations meeting the objections expressed in the declaration.”⁴⁹ Williams was sorry that the Republicans were determined to make a political question out of an international situation, but he saw no way to prevent their adopting such a line of action if they wanted to.⁵⁰ The sole object of the Mississippi Senator, he asserted, was to “help the President and to help the cause of peace and civilization throughout the world.”⁵¹

⁴⁷ Williams to Eugene Hedgins, March 3, 1919, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Denna F. Fleming, *The United States and the League of Nations, 1918-1920* (New York, 1932), 217-18; 223-24.

⁴⁹ Henry C. Lodge, *The Senate and the League of Nations* (New York, 1925), 119.

⁵⁰ Williams to James W. Garner, April 1, 1919, in Williams Papers.

⁵¹ *Id.* to Joseph P. Tumulty, June 23, 1919, *ibid.*

Borah was opposed to any type of international league or alliance, and took his stand on the doctrine of isolation enunciated by George Washington. Borah "was the original Irreconcilable,"⁵² but was later joined by Miles Poindexter, Philander C. Knox, Hiram Johnson, and others. Because of his absolute sincerity, the Senator from Idaho, though opposing the League with all the force of his giant intellect, retained the friendship and respect of the President and Democratic Senators. Williams, however, accused Borah of trying to apply Washington's political philosophy of the stagecoach and riding habit age to the age of the airplane, telegraph, and wireless.

Lodge, in his condemnation of the League of Nations in the Senate, went to some length to state that his actions were in no way based upon his dislike for President Wilson. This may have been a sincere statement from the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, but very few people today will contend that Lodge was so unprejudiced in his attitude toward the leader of the Administration that he could analyze his feelings and the situation accurately. James E. Watson, a Republican Senator and close friend of the Sage of Nahant, has presented in his *As I Knew Them* the personal enmity that existed between the President and the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee as the basis of much that occurred in the Senate during the days of the League discussion.⁵³ Williams had served with Lodge since the closing years of the nineteenth century as a member of several organizations and at various meetings for the encouragement of international arbitration and peace. In the speeches which Williams delivered on the League issue, he frequently exposed Lodge's stand as partisan, and bitterly assailed him for it. Years earlier, both the Mississippian and the Senator from Massachusetts had entertained

⁵² Claudius O. Johnson, *Borah of Idaho* (New York, 1936), 223.

⁵³ Watson, *As I Knew Them*, 200-202.

in common the idea that partisan politics should stop at the coast line. In short, Williams' friendship for Borah, despite differences of opinion on this very important question, was deepened and strengthened,⁵⁴ whereas his friendship for Lodge, which had been stronger and deeper than that for the Senator from Idaho, cooled and gave place to disgust that was never changed.

During the debate on the League Covenant, before Wilson returned from his second period of the peace conference, the Irish question was thrown like a bombshell into the Senate. The cause was the introduction on June 5 of a resolution approved by the Foreign Relations Committee and presented by Borah, which requested the American Peace Commission to secure a hearing before the peace conference for representatives of Ireland. Williams objected to its immediate consideration, and stated that the resolution was "very ill advised." When it passed on June 6, sixty Senators voted for it, and only one, Williams, answered "No." He "was the only senator who had the independence to oppose this unprecedented attempt of that body to queer the relations of the country with the most friendly nation in the world."⁵⁵ On the floor of the Senate several days later, Williams asked his colleagues the reason why a resolution had not been enacted that would also recognize the independence of Korea from Japan. He answered the question himself, giving two reasons: first, there were no Korean votes in the United States, but the Irish-Americans were

⁵⁴ Williams to William E. Borah, May 27, 1919, in Williams Papers. A cartoon was sent to Williams with the request that he forward it to Borah and ask him to send it to Lodge, who was to pass it on to Penrose. The request was granted although Williams was not very certain of the ability of his colleagues to look at the cartoon as a joke at the expense of themselves with "the same impartial humor as they would look upon one at somebody else's expense." They might get a moment's fun from it, too, if they were not too angry these days "to see themselves as others see them."

⁵⁵ William E. Dodd, *Woodrow Wilson and His Work* (Garden City, N.Y., 1920), 324.

powerful politically; and second, Japan might not deal in a very agreeable manner with the United States if such a resolution were enacted.⁵⁶

Williams said he was in one respect like the Kaiser. Richard Bartholdt, Congressman from Missouri, on one of his trips to his native country, had sent his personal card to Wilhelm II, requesting an interview. On the card the Congressman wrote "a German-American." Wilhelm II replied, "I know what a German is, I know what an American is, but I do not know what a German-American is."⁵⁷ The Senator expressed himself even more forcefully to a colleague when he said: "Damn a man that has got to be some particular sort of American instead of simply an American."⁵⁸

Because of Williams' opposition to the Irish resolution, he received much criticism from the Irish element in the United States. If his letters reveal the true feeling of the man, these criticisms in no way affected him. He did not care "a continental damn if all the Sinn Feiners in the world passed a resolution condemning me . . . I will sleep just as sound, eat just as well, and drink just as cordially."⁵⁹

Years earlier Williams had encouraged the Irish movement for home rule. He still believed that they should be given their independence, but he did not believe that the United States Senate should pass an official resolution advising England as to what to do. What would we do if England passed such a resolution advising us to grant the Philippine Islands their independence? The Senator had been in minorities before and had found himself sometimes wrong. This time, however, he knew he was right. Had not the Sinn Feiners been pro-German, and were they not aided by German money?⁶⁰ This was not a very popular question to ask. "But," said a defender, "John Sharp Williams fortu-

⁵⁶ *Cong. Record*, 66 Cong., 1 Sess., 792-93.

⁵⁷ Williams to George S. Viereck, July 9, 1919, in Williams Papers.

⁵⁸ *Id.* to William H. King, February 11, 1918, *ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Id.* to E. S. Edwards, June 17, 1919, *ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Id.* to Henry Minor, July 5, 1919, *ibid.*

nately happens to be a statesman who doesn't care for popularity.”⁶¹

Williams wrote his former colleague, LeRoy Percy, that the situation was politics pure and simple. The Democrats, in their cloakroom after the resolution had been approved, admitted that the whole thing was foolish, but they felt that they could not permit the Republicans to secure any political advantage over them. The Republicans in their cloakroom admitted the falsity of the resolution. Williams knew when he cast his vote that he would probably be the only man to vote against the resolution, as there was only one other name called after his. “A good many fellows who voted the other way told me afterwards that I voted right.”⁶²

Many times during the debate on the League of Nations, the Senate galleries were packed with people. Williams claimed that the Irish-American Union, with its headquarters in Washington, was responsible for a large number of the people in the audience. They hated England, and many of them temporarily believed they had reasons for hating the Democratic Administration and the League of Nations. Thus Lodge was supported in his leadership during the fight against the ratification of the treaty. They hissed any who attempted to reply to the Massachusetts Senator and his group. Williams anticipated the hissing, and on one occasion early in his reply made his attack on Lodge personal.⁶³

On October 16 the Mississippian made a fiery speech against Irish-Americans who placed the welfare of Ireland above that of America. He had had a “drink or two,” but he later claimed that he “was not drunk.” He said some things which should not have been said, and struck them out of his speech before it was published in the *Record*.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Jackson *Daily News*, June 12, 1919.

⁶² Williams to LeRoy Percy, July 10, 1919, in Williams Papers.

⁶³ *Id.* to E. J. Doering, August 18, 1919; *id.* to William H. Fleming, August 22, 1919, *ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Id.* to W. D. Vandiver, October 25, 1919, *ibid.*

After concluding his remarks, Williams walked from the Capitol to the Senate Office Building with his Republican friend, Jim Watson. The Indiana Senator remonstrated with Williams "because he imbibed so much and asked him why he did not take a couple of good 'snorts' and quit as do nearly all drinkers?" John Sharp stopped on the sidewalk, turned and faced his large, would-be moral reformer, and said: "Jim, I do not allow men to talk to me about my personal habits because they are my own business and nobody else has a right to interfere. But you and I have been friends for so long a time, and then you are such a damned good natured fool anyhow, that I will answer you. One time I made up my mind that I would never take another drink, that I would quit forever. I abstained absolutely for six months, and I tell you the honest truth, Jim, when I say that in all that six months I never had an original thought."⁶⁵

Returning to his office the morning after the speech, Williams dictated several letters to friends of his in Congress who were of Irish derivation. Of these friends he asked forgiveness for any offense that he might have committed, "personally or racially," to anyone.⁶⁶

Williams was invited by the *Nation* to serve on its Committee of One-Hundred to investigate the Irish question, but he refused. He regarded this committee as "about the most stupid, impertinent and insolent, self-constituted grand jury of 'international inquest' I ever heard of." Williams never had been in his life "a Self-constituted Busy Body," even "in my own country neighborhood, and I have no idea of being ass enough to constitute myself one in the affairs of Ireland and England, with neither of which quarrels have I, as an American official, any rightful or efficacious concern."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Watson, *As I Knew Them*, 288.

⁶⁶ See Williams to James D. Phelan, October 17, 1919, and other letters in Williams Papers.

⁶⁷ Henry Demarest Lloyd to Williams, October 8, 1920, *ibid.*

Soon after the return of the President to the White House on July 9, he received a letter from Williams expressing gratitude, “with all my heart,” for what Wilson had done to gain everything he could “for the liberty and peace of the world at Paris.” Williams clearly recognized the situation in a general way. He knew that the treaty did not, in some things, check with what the President had desired, but the Senator understood that “the bickering and jealousy which existed between the European races and nations and diplomats” made their accomplishment impossible.

Perhaps the Senator was trying to warn the President as to what he thought would be the future of the treaty in the Senate. “Regardless of what the Senate may do,” Williams wrote, the time for the ratification of the treaty was unlimited. It would go into effect when three nations adopted it. Wilson and Williams could afford to wait until the American people had an opportunity to elect another Senate. The President was greatly handicapped by the lack of a harmonious public at home when the crucial test came. Despite this opposition, Wilson had “succeeded in making the League of Nations the very foundation of the treaty of peace and that was the distinctive achievement of the conference.”

After complimenting the President on his great work at the peace conference and pointing out to him his opinion of the future of the treaty in the Senate, Williams thought it well to give the President a suggestion. “Please show a little more tact in dealing with some of the obstructionists.” No amount of tact could have any effect upon Borah, upon Poindexter, or upon Jim Reed, but it might have some upon a good many other Senators. “Sometimes a fellow grits his teeth and says, ‘I am going to be pleasant to A, although I think A is deficient in intellect and public spirit.’ Maybe after a while he finds that A was right all the time.”⁶⁸ The

⁶⁸ Williams to Wilson, July 9, 1919, *ibid.*

President admitted to Williams the soundness of the advice: "It is good advice and I know that it is."⁶⁹

Wilson delivered an address to the Senate, and presented the treaty on July 10. He was enthusiastically received by all but the confirmed opponents of the League. Williams felt that the speech was "a fitting close to a magnificent and unselfish and upon the whole effective work at Paris as a member of the Peace Conference."⁷⁰ His approval and gratitude made the President happy and gave him a "new spirit for the work ahead."⁷¹

The forty-nine Republican members of the Senate divided themselves definitely into two groups. One faction composed of about fifteen members were opposed to the treaty. These irreconcilables were in favor of any reservations that might be proposed. About thirty-four members favored the treaty with reservations. This group has been divided into mild reservationists and effective reservationists. The Democratic minority could count a few irreconcilables among its membership.⁷²

The Williams papers contain a memorandum which is important to the point under consideration. The League with reservations would be "emasculated and foredoomed to failure." European nations would accept any reservations which we made because they needed American money to finance them. "Rather than adopt the Lodge reservations, it would be better to wait." Someday the American people would knock at the doors of the councils of Europe and ask to be admitted. "It is a shame that we could not enter as a charter member and dominate the League, as we undoubtedly would have dominated it. But it is better to fail to enter and fail to dominate than it is to destroy. . . . Re-

⁶⁹ Wilson to Williams, July 15, 1919, *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Williams to Wilson, July 10, 1919, *ibid.*

⁷¹ Wilson to Williams, July 12, 1919, *ibid.*

⁷² Probably the most conspicuous of the Democratic irreconcilables were James A. Reed of Missouri and Charles S. Thomas of Colorado. See Fleming, *The United States and the League of Nations, 1918-1920*, pp. 235-39.



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**WILLIAMS AT THE TIME OF THE
TREATY FIGHT**

member that if *A* League of Nations fails you never could make the average man understand that it was not *THE* League of Nations that failed.”⁷³ Williams would vote for the League because it was in the interest of world peace and civilization, because of the special interests in America which opposed it, and, finally, because it was right.⁷⁴

There were those high in the councils of the nations who appreciated the part Williams was playing in the discussion of the League in the Senate. McAdoo had been following “with great interest and satisfaction” the Mississippian’s remarks on the floor. He wrote, “the kind of militancy you are expressing in the Senate is just the thing that is needed to put the heart and enthusiasm into the ranks everywhere.”⁷⁵ Practically all of Williams’ efforts were in behalf of the League and the treaty as a whole. Remove the League from the treaty, and there would be nothing left “but some European boundary questions in which this country isn’t particularly interested.” In short, Williams did not “care a cent about the balance of the treaty.”⁷⁶ The President replied confidentially that he felt reassured to know that his judgment and conclusions were “running on all fours” with Williams’.⁷⁷

Although the Foreign Relations Committee was meeting practically every day the Senate was in session, and although the Senate was debating the treaty constantly, Williams announced during the closing days of July that he would make a hurried trip to Mississippi to cast his vote in the state Democratic primary that was to be held on August 5. Unless absolutely prevented, he never failed to make the thousand-mile journey from Washington to vote. After casting his ballot, the Senator returned to his official duties in Washington.

⁷³ Original memorandum in Williams Papers.

⁷⁴ Williams to W. I. Hammack and others, June 18, 1919, *ibid.*

⁷⁵ William G. McAdoo to Williams, June 25, 1919, *ibid.*

⁷⁶ Williams to Wilson, July 26, 1919, *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Wilson to Williams, August 1, 1919, *ibid.*

The treaty, as reported from the Foreign Relations Committee to the Senate, was emasculated by more than fifty proposed amendments.⁷⁸ The New York *World* of September 11 entitled the committee's report "LODGE'S PRUSSIAN REPORT." Williams entered the editorial in the *Record* and made a long and bitter speech.⁷⁹ Lodge was unable to see himself as he really existed. He was a "narrow person, a narrow New England sectionalist and a narrow Federalist politician."⁸⁰ Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard, restrained "with difficulty" the expression of his "disappointment and disgust at the behavior of Senator Lodge. Just think of it!" he wrote. "Lodge graduated from Harvard in 1871 and was Instructor of History there on my nomination from 1876 to 1879."⁸¹ Williams thought Lodge "entirely forgetful of the fact that anybody but the Senate of the United States had anything to do with the Treaty: entirely forgetful that neither he, nor Knox, nor anybody else any more than the President could have brought back from Paris an instrument, every provision of which would have been in accordance with his wishes." The parts of the document which Williams did not like "sank into absolute insignificance in comparison with the meaning and great advantage of it."⁸²

Williams wished that he could make the Senators "behave." But he could not control them; only "God could shut Senators' mouths, make them quit talking about nothing." He alone could direct their attention to "what is worthwhile, and to 'the weightier matters of the law.'"⁸³ In outbursts to his friends Williams registered his increas-

⁷⁸ There were two minority reports. For an able and concise presentation of these reports, see Fleming, *The United States and the League of Nations*, 1918-1920, pp. 359-65.

⁷⁹ *Cong. Record*, 66 Cong., 1 Sess., 5232-36.

⁸⁰ Williams to F. C. Drane, August 16, 1919, in Williams Papers.

⁸¹ Charles W. Eliot to Williams, September 8, 1919, *ibid.*

⁸² Williams to Eliot, September 10, 1919, *ibid.*

⁸³ *Id.* to T. H. Brown, August 14, 1919, *ibid.*

ing disgust with public life and his desire to retire from the arena of politics. Such statements as he made in his private letters, however, must be accepted with a grain of salt. One has only to wade through the *Record* of this period to conclude that if anyone needed protection against the “gas attacks” of august Senators, it was the Senate when listening to the senior Senator from Mississippi. Williams spoke often and long during these months of debate on the treaty and the League.

Many questions were coming up, however, and Williams was “a scholar, and a brilliant one”; and “probably the best-read man in either house.”⁸⁴ He was familiar with all the larger questions that came up for consideration. There was the Shantung question, for instance, about which Williams could not understand anyone’s alarm. Some went so far as to anticipate that Japan, holding Shantung, might attempt the “subjugation of our country.”⁸⁵ The only hope for China, Williams thought, was the adoption of the League of Nations; “otherwise, Japan would eat her up within the next ten years and you know as well as I do that we are not going to war to prevent it.”⁸⁶

On the evening of September 3 the President and his party left on the fateful tour across the United States to the Pacific. Tumulty reported “excellent receptions all along the line, and everybody is most enthusiastic.”⁸⁷ Wilson was in the middle of a strenuous journey, but he was strengthened for these great mental and physical hardships “by thinking of the splendid support” which was being given him by his friends.⁸⁸ Copies of the President’s speeches were

⁸⁴ McAdoo, *Crowded Years*, 266. Marshall, *Recollections . . . , A Hoosier Salad*, 301, says “of all the men I have ever known, John Sharp Williams had the most intimate knowledge of world history and world politics.”

⁸⁵ William Hookman to Williams, September 5, 1919, in Williams Papers.

⁸⁶ Williams to Hookman, September 8, 1919, *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Tumulty to Williams, September 6, 1919, *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Wilson to *id.*, September 16, 1919, *ibid.*

sent to Williams at various times with the request that he use his own judgment "as to having them in the *Record*." ⁸⁹ On September 26, the President collapsed.

In the Senate, however, debate continued. Williams answered Borah on September 29 extemporaneously, and the speech brought him many letters of congratulations. The Chief Clerk of the Senate, who was thoroughly familiar with the debates which had been held, wrote flatteringly that "without exception your speech was the greatest and most forceful argument for the League of Nations that has been made. . . . What a vast fountain of knowledge you must have to get up in an impromptu manner and answer every question raised by Senator Borah." ⁹⁰ The Vice-President wrote: "I have always been amazed at the clarity of your thought and expression. Of course like all impatient Presiding Officers I have sometimes wished you would not speak. But I would rather be the author of the speech you made last night than all I have ever said." ⁹¹

Taft could not understand the actions of the mild reservationists nor of the majority of the Committee on Foreign Relations. The opposition to the League and the treaty had all been a stunning blow to him. He believed that if the Democrats should defeat the treaty and hold it up by refusing to give the two-thirds majority vote, the Republican Senators would "find themselves in a state of embarrassment," which "they decline to anticipate, but which I hope they will live to realize." ⁹² Williams would give the former President no information in regard to the "vagaries and incomprehensibilities" of the thought of Senators who believed that they could change a treaty by amendments without sending it back to the countries who were parties to the contract. He hoped that if the League passed with amendments and reservations, the President would place

⁸⁹ Tumulty to *id.*, September 9, 1919, *ibid.*

⁹⁰ F. D. Byington to *id.*, October 1, 1919, *ibid.*

⁹¹ Thomas R. Marshall to *id.*, September 30, 1919, *ibid.*

⁹² William H. Taft to *id.*, October 24, 1919, *ibid.*

it on a shelf in the White House just as Taft had done with the arbitration treaties. The results of the world-wide humiliation would “rest upon the international ‘muck-rakers’ who are parties of the Peace Poisoning Squad.”⁹³

Without Wilson’s active leadership in the closing months of 1919, the Democrats failed to retain the working unity that they had held in the earlier period of the debate on the League and treaty. Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock “had the responsibility of leadership without the actual authority to lead.”⁹⁴ Many reservations were rejected in November. At times the Democrats as a party voted with the irreconcilables in opposition to motions favorable to the League. The ratification of the treaty and of the League was defeated with the Lodge reservations and again without them. Apparently, compromises would be attempted, but the chances of success would be slight. Williams wrote Tumulty that “nothing more disgraceful ever happened in American history than the manner in which a large majority of the Senate . . . surrendered to . . . [the] irreconcilable enemies to any sort of league of nations,” and correctly predicted that “in the wisdom of God it will be necessary, disastrously necessary, that another great war occur to teach the American people and their representatives in the Senate the plain common sense doctrine that two-thirds of every statesman’s mind and efforts might very well be devoted to instituting and maintaining peace, and that in order to institute and maintain it, some sacrifices of local sovereignty are absolutely necessary.”⁹⁵

Before the political campaign of 1920 got underway, the final rejection of the treaty had been accomplished. In February the Senate voted to reconsider. The treaty was again referred to the Foreign Relations Committee, and was

⁹³ Williams to Taft, November 4, 1919, *ibid.*

⁹⁴ Fleming, *The United States and the League of Nations, 1918-1920*, p. 387.

⁹⁵ Williams to Tumulty, November 22, 1919, in possession of Mr. Tumulty. Copy in Williams Papers.

immediately reported back to the floor, where debate was resumed. For a month the debating continued. During this time Lodge's resolutions, which the President had earlier requested the Democrats to defeat, were made more objectionable to the President. A final vote of 49 to 35 was reached on March 19, 1920. The treaty failed of ratification by seven votes less than the necessary constitutional majority. Only the southern Democratic Senators, as a group, followed the White House leadership. None of the northern Democrats voted with the reservationists, but twelve Senators did not vote.⁹⁶

Wilson, rather than admit defeat to Lodge and the world, determined to carry his case to the American people. Could the national election of 1920 be decided upon the issue of the League of Nations? Many doubted that the contest could be waged upon such a question to the extent that the results of the election would be an accurate test of public opinion. In fact, Williams said before the campaign began that "One of the difficulties of the American democratic government is that one could not get a clear cut opinion of the Americans upon any single issue at a general election."⁹⁷ After the campaign, however, Lodge concluded "that if ever a political issue was decided by a popular vote, that decision was rendered upon the League of Nations by the American people in November, 1920."⁹⁸

The struggle for the ratification of the League was the most impassioned fight of Williams' public career. Because of his friendship for Wilson and his loyalty to the Democratic party, the issue necessarily would have commanded his support. However, nothing but a heartfelt belief in the fundamental principles embodied in the Covenant of the League could have drawn from him such Herculean labors in its behalf nor have left him so embittered when those efforts failed.

⁹⁶ *Cong. Record*, 66 Cong., 2 Sess., 4599.

⁹⁷ Memorandum in Williams Papers.

⁹⁸ Lodge, *The Senate and the League of Nations*, 210.

Chapter XVI

BACKWASH OF THE WAR

As early as January, 1919, a southern newspaper advocated the nomination of Williams for the Presidency in 1920. Those who thought that the Democratic party had no strong member in its ranks, the paper reported, had overlooked John Sharp Williams. Not only had his record in the House and the Senate been "without reproach" and one of distinction, but the trying days of the war had brought him to the front as a patriotic American who was loyal to the core.¹ Had the Senator been consulted, he would have given a humorous answer, as he had done earlier upon similar occasions. If he had spoken seriously, he probably would have made the same statement that he did as a much younger man serving in the House: that no person from the Lower South, however brilliant and honest, could be elected to the Presidency of the United States. To one friend who tried to persuade him to "go after" the position in a serious way, he replied: "As I am not fool enough to think I could be President, I of course do not want my name used as a candidate even for the nomination."²

In answer to an inquiry as to what he thought in regard to the nomination of Vice-President Thomas R. Marshall for the Presidency, Williams replied that he would be "perfectly satisfied" with such a selection. He had earlier revealed his bewilderment as to the party choice: "The Lord only knows," who would be the best man for the Demo-

¹ Tifton (Ga.) *Gazette*, January 28, 1919.

² Williams to Robert H. Henry, April 27, 1920, in Williams Papers.

crats to name for President; "I confess that I don't."³ The Senator thought it would be better for the delegates to go to San Francisco uninstructed.⁴

When Williams was consulted about some proposed resolutions which were to be presented for adoption at the Mississippi convention,⁵ he objected to the statement that the state conference "ought to adopt the League of Nations with reservations." The Democratic party "may be forced finally to do that; but there is no use saying it." The wiser and better method of amending the League Covenant would be to amend it after entering the "League of Nations itself."⁶ In his reply to his friend, Williams offered the following amendment to the resolutions: "We heartily endorse the administration of Woodrow Wilson, and especially the magnificent work done by him at Versailles. We especially approve the Treaty of Peace, including above all the League of Nations; and we condemn the Lodge Reservations to the League as pernicious, self-stultifying and dangerous to the peace of the world."⁷

The Mississippi Democratic Convention was held in Jackson during the recess of Congress in 1920. Although because of illness Williams was not present, everything went as he desired. The convention endorsed Wilson's Administration, his work at Versailles, and would not allow any critics of the Administration to go as delegates to the national convention. Williams hoped to attend this meeting on the western coast, but his family physician believed that the long trip would be too tiring after his recent illness.⁸ By June 26 he had sufficiently recovered his strength to pencil a long letter to the President, who was also ill.

³ *Id.* to *id.*, February 16, 1920, *ibid.*

⁴ *Id.* to Charles Humphries, May 19, 1920; *id.* to Thomas R. Marshall, May 19, 1920, *ibid.*

⁵ Henry Minor to Williams, May 18, 1920, *ibid.*

⁶ Williams to Minor, May 19, 1920, *ibid.*

⁷ From the original in Williams Papers, dated May 18, 1920.

⁸ Williams to Oscar W. Underwood, June 25, 1920; *id.* to Wilson, June 26, 1920, in Williams Papers; Jackson *Daily News*, June 29, 1920.

Neither thought that the other had omitted anything that could have been done in the great cause which both had "so much at heart."⁹

Williams hoped that the presidential candidate would be someone who had been neither a critic nor an ardent admirer of President Wilson. The candidate must favor the League of Nations, and oppose the Lodge reservations. Herbert C. Hoover, in Williams' opinion, would make "a splendid President." Unfortunately, he had been in China, in Belgium, and elsewhere for a number of years. His thoughts and life had been so utilized that he had not taken much interest in American politics. He hardly knew with which of the two great parties he should ally himself.¹⁰ He was an American "who was vested with great responsibility who proved equal, if not more than equal, to his great task." Williams believed him to be a great man in "character and intelligence and unselfishness,"¹¹ but his lack of interest in politics would be a disadvantage. The Democratic convention selected James M. Cox, former Governor of Ohio, and Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, as the nominees.

The Democratic Headquarters asked Williams to make some speeches in the national campaign. This he refused to do with the exception of a few addresses in Mississippi on the League of Nations.¹² Wilson was also invited to take an active part in the campaign. Immediately upon reading the statement in the press, Williams reached for a pencil and wrote the President in his usual advisory way: "If they mean that you should go out and make speeches, do not do it. Your health is of more importance now to the party, the nation, and the world than it is important that you should do that." He wanted the President to deliver, if he felt

⁹ Williams to Wilson, June 26, 1920; Wilson to Williams, July 1, 1920, in Williams Papers.

¹⁰ Williams to Henry S. Huntington, June 29, 1920, *ibid.*

¹¹ *Id.* to M. S. Pittman, March 13, 1920, *ibid.*

¹² Jackson *Daily News*, October 17, 1920.

equal to the task, one speech somewhere in a hall "not too large" but strategically located. Wilson was urged to conserve his strength and not use it up as a stump speaker.¹³ Again, the President was indebted to his friend for "material encouragement."¹⁴

Williams did not believe that an election could be decided upon one issue alone. Nevertheless, he anxiously hoped that every Democrat who opposed the League of Nations would be defeated. He expressed this desire in characteristic form. "I hope that every Democrat who formed or allowed himself to be drawn into any sort of alliance or concord of action or expression with the Peace Treaty Poison Squad will be given a . . . sleeping potion and laid away to sleep off their [*sic*] venom in a bed [of defeat]." ¹⁵ Williams was reasonably sure about the outcome of the election. He stated later on the floor of the Senate that he did not expect to see the League of Nations accepted in this first attempt. The whole history of the United States and the traditions of the American people from the dawn of the republic had been isolationist. It had been the political philosophy of Washington, of Jefferson, and many of the other founding fathers. There were also many elements in the country at variance with the leadership of the League movement. Even though the Senator possessed these ideas of defeat in his own mind, he would not divulge them to the President. Within two weeks of the election, the Senator wrote, "May God grant [that] the American people, by using their common verdict, may promote the cause of the peace of the world and show an earnest desire to be internationally heart and soul—even leader of the cause." ¹⁶

A few moments before he left his home to go to Benton, a village one mile west of Cedar Grove, to cast his ballot,

¹³ Williams to Wilson, September 25, 1920, in Williams Papers.

¹⁴ Wilson to Williams, September 29, 1920, *ibid.*

¹⁵ Williams to Robert H. Henry, April 27, 1920, *ibid.*

¹⁶ *Id.* to Wilson, October 21, 1920, *ibid.*

he wrote that he had "about despaired of the results." The Senator believed that it would be "Love's Labor Lost."¹⁷ After voting he returned to his home and to his books to await the expected verdict. According to the President's private secretary, Wilson sat in the lonely quiet of the White House receiving the disappointing returns of the election with the comment that the people of America "have disgraced us in the eyes of the world."¹⁸

After the election returns were in and the world had witnessed the defeat of the Democratic party, Williams, "at home," wrote two letters: one to the President and the other to the President-elect. The letter that he wrote to Wilson "did much to bolster and hearten him" during the trying hours of defeat.¹⁹

"God didn't create the world in one act," the letter to Wilson began. It was scarcely possible that the campaign for the League of Nations could be won by the first battle, especially when there was "the *apparent* voice of the Fathers in an opposite direction." The Senator prophesied that the President's enemies could not hold together now that they were in power and must do something. "Conserve your health," he concluded. "Events will work their further confusion, events in Europe. God still reigns. The people *can* learn though not quickly."²⁰

To Harding, the President-elect, the Senator wrote characteristically: "I came near wiring you: 'Reluctant congratulations; remember Bordeaux,' but I thought it would be better to wait to hear from Toomsaba, Schuqualak, Bucatuna, Sookarnochie, and Yiogeoghanghenny. The Democratic majorities in those places are, however, not large enough to overcome your vote in other precincts like New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, hence I find myself forced into labored and insincere congratulations, and some ad-

¹⁷ *Id.* to James Stone, November 2, 1920, *ibid.*

¹⁸ Tumulty, *Wilson As I Know Him*, 501.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 502.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 502-503; Williams to Wilson, November 8, 1920, in Williams Papers.

vice." The advice was that Williams should be made "animal tamer." He assured Harding that he would uphold him when he acted in the common interest and in the interest of world peace.²¹

Wilson showed his appreciation in a message to his "dear friend." They had the same interpretation of the recent election. The Republicans would have all of the rope they wanted, with which to hang themselves. He predicted that the hanging would be complete.²² Harding did not reply to the "reluctant congratulations" of his Senate colleague, but soon after his inauguration a cordial note was sent to Williams inviting him to call sometime soon at the White House.²³

Williams characterized the causes of the Democratic defeat as encyclopedic. German-Americans had voted against Wilson for going to war, Irish-Americans on account of the League of Nations, and Italian-Americans because of the Fiume question. The high tension of altruism and idealism had relaxed. Increased taxes because of the war had made the Administration unpopular in some quarters. The traditional policy of no alliances with European nations had great weight in the outcome.²⁴ The League of Nations idea was not dead, however. International idealism would now begin to fight. "Woodrow Wilson, the first martyr to the cause, is the seed of the Church."²⁵

In the meantime, Williams waited in vain for his appointment, by Harding, as "animal tamer." The Senator probably would not get the job as the President-elect would "want somebody with more respect for the animals."²⁶ In a more serious vein, the Senator mentioned that he had wit-

²¹ *Id.* to Warren G. Harding, November 8, 1920, *ibid.* The places mentioned are rural villages in Mississippi.

²² Wilson to Williams, November 15, 1920, *ibid.*

²³ Harding to *id.*, April 20, 1921, *ibid.*

²⁴ Norval Richardson to *id.*, November 4, 1920; Williams to Richardson, November 9, 1920, *ibid.*

²⁵ Williams to B. W. Newman, November 9, 1920, *ibid.*

²⁶ *Id.* to Hamilton E. Reynolds, November 25, 1920, *ibid.*

nessed a "whole nation exalted as on the wings of idealism and then sunk in a narrow slough of nationalistic selfishness." He could not get off the earth to avoid the spectacle, but he could stay at Cedar Grove Plantation, where his mockingbirds knew nothing about it, and where he could forget all about it while listening to them.²⁷ Williams feared that if all efforts to establish some form of League of Nations to keep the peace of the world failed, "within less than 25 years you will be faced by a union between Germany, Russia, and Japan."²⁸

After the war closed, the United States, like other nations, had many great domestic problems to solve. Many of these ills had originated before the World War period as a result of industrialization. Moreover, the cost in dollars and cents of America's readjustment program was greater than the expenditures for her war machine during the actual fighting period. The country became infested with various "cures" for social, economic, and political maladjustments.

During the period of the war, the United States government had taken control of industries to an unprecedented extent. Williams understood the crisis and had willingly "followed the leader" in this control and regimentation of industries. For example, the railroads of the country were taken over by the government. In December, 1917, the President placed the transportation problem in the lap of McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury. The vastness of the undertaking was characteristically indicated by a plantation Negro, who, when informed by the planter that the President had taken all of the railroads of the country and had handed them to his son-in-law, exclaimed: "Boss, dat Mr. Wilson sho' am som' pow'rful man, ain't he?"²⁹

²⁷ *Id.* to Otho C. Stubblefield, November 25, 1920, *ibid.*

²⁸ *Cong. Record*, 66 Cong., 2 Sess., 4459-62.

²⁹ The writer, although a small boy at that time, recalls the above conversation between his father, Samuel C. Osborn, and a Negro who lived on his plantation.

At times Williams objected to the policies employed by McAdoo in handling wartime transportation. Much of the heavy freight traffic should have been placed upon the waterways, the Senator believed. Congestion was in evidence throughout the country, though not so much as in 1916 and in 1917 before the government took control. Williams believed this congestion to be due to the shifting of commerce from water to rail, and gave an example to support his contention. In the winter of 1917-1918 thousands of bushels of corn were shipped from Georgia to Texas and New Mexico by railroad. These shipments, he argued, should have been sent by rail only to points along the Gulf, such as Pensacola, Mobile, Gulfport, and New Orleans. From these points, the grain could have been shipped to Texas ports nearest to its ultimate destination.³⁰

Many saw in government control of transportation during the war a means of establishing permanent public ownership. Williams was opposed to the continuation of government control once the crisis had subsided. His opposition earlier to Bryan's advocacy of government operation had been pronounced. Williams had not changed his mind. He did think, however, that the railroads "should be encouraged and if necessary forced to come together under common management so as to avoid duplication of terminals and unnecessary absorption of freight by long lines when short ones could carry it, and unnecessary competition with waterways with which they should continually . . . cooperate."³¹ All should be done under strong Federal regulation of rates and wages in schedules and joint traffic, and thus state socialism could be held in check instead of encouraged. The Senator was willing for the government to own, at least in part, the express companies of the country in order that they could be operated in connection with the parcel post system.³²

³⁰ Williams to William G. McAdoo, January 14, 1918, in Williams Papers.

³¹ *Id.* to N. C. Pearson, January 27, 1919, *ibid.*

³² Jackson *Daily News*, January 23, 1919.

While the government was considering the future status of the railroads, the employees tried to hasten the decision by threatening to strike in the summer of 1919. The railroad labor agitators were erroneously informed when they believed that laborers could not be secured to take the places of striking railroad employees, said Williams. Such a scarcity might have been true earlier, but during the war many men had been trained by the railroads. Those unemployed or working for themselves were willing to replace all who wanted to strike. Any group of individuals who were not willing to leave a quarrel between themselves and another group to a fair arbitration were seeking "some selfish, illegitimate purpose." Moreover, the great majority of disputes arbitrated resulted in favor of labor. The Senator could recall only one unfavorable decision, and he did not mention that by name.³³

On September 4, 1919, Williams made an address to Congress, and through it to the railroad employees, in which he told them that it would be impossible to secure all their objectives. The labor leaders were astonished that a man in politics should assert himself so boldly, if not defiantly. Wilson praised his courage, and said there was need of more of his type in public life. Very few in that period, noted for the clamor of organized groups and classes, were brave enough to speak aloud in the halls of Congress. No group, Williams warned, would be permitted to threaten and browbeat the American people into granting its demands without his opposition.

Williams could not stomach several parts of the Transportation Act of 1920 but he most bitterly criticized the provision by which the government entered into a contract with the railroads to guarantee them 6 per cent interest on investments over a certain period of time. As a matter of principle, Williams thought the government had no more right to guarantee the railroads 6 per cent upon their in-

³³ *Cong. Record*, 66 Cong., 1 Sess., 4835-36.

vestments than it had to guarantee the farmer a price for his products which would pay him 6 per cent on farm operations. The government was not "an independent entity." It had no separate source of revenue. Every dollar that came into the national Treasury had to be taken out of the pocket of some citizen. Government income did not, like the Israelites' manna, rain from heaven. Farmers and other groups had also suffered during the war. Had Germany won, Americans would have lost in prestige, independence, and honor. These things were more valuable than money.³⁴

On many occasions before the war, Williams had supported acts of Congress which bettered conditions for laborers. He always contended, however, that capital and labor should remember that the public, as a third party to their struggles, should be accredited some recognition.³⁵ During the war the American Federation of Labor was more successful in its endeavor to better labor conditions than it had been when industries were more free from government supervision. The nation was at war, and the government conceded labor's demands rather than risk strikes. In addition, the Congressmen needed labor votes, and were thus very amenable to labor's program.

A movement which gathered much force was an attempt by the Federal government to compel industries to limit employment to eight hours a day. Williams did not believe such a law constitutional. The only way, he held, that Congress could pass a constitutional law was through its power over interstate commerce. The products of manufacturers, produced by labor working more than eight hours a day, might be barred from interstate commerce. Even then, the Senator said that he might have some doubt as to the wisdom of Congress' trying to do indirectly what the Federal government had no right to do directly.³⁶ When the Presi-

³⁴ Williams to William H. Louisell, January 28, 1921, in Williams Papers.

³⁵ See numerous letters in *ibid.*

³⁶ Williams to Wilson, January 29, 1918, *ibid.*

dent began to consider making the eight-hour day, increased pay per hour, and time and a half for overtime work compulsory in all lumber industries, he did not have to wait long to ascertain Williams' opinion. The Senator had no objection to lumbermen, or other employers, making agreements with their employees in regard to hours and wages, but "The United States government had no right under the sun," he argued, "to order that state of things into existence." Congress had no right to do it, and, of course, the Executive had not. Wilson was being severely criticized for the way in which he was using his wartime powers. He was warned by Williams "not to do anything that your enemies would construe to be undue straining of your executive powers."³⁷

Strikes were prevalent throughout the country during the war. With the flowing of unprecedented income into their hands, the laboring classes had money with which not only to buy the necessities of life, but also, through unionization, to fight and bargain for better conditions. Williams urged capital and labor to assume a more co-operative attitude toward each other. Men were not striking merely for enough money to give them good wages; they were contemplating sympathetic strikes. Quitting work was a man's right when he desired to do so, but under no condition was it justifiable to attempt to coerce Congress and the public "by closing up the avenues of consumption and interstate commerce, and cynically suggesting 'starvation or surrender.'"³⁸ This was wrong and intolerable. The country was faced with the situation of a class of its citizens attempting to usurp the power of all the people. Nothing could be more effective in turning public opinion against the laborers than for them to strike in such a way as to cause a great amount of suffering to the helpless women and children of our cities. That would

³⁷ *Id.* to *id.*, February 5, 1918, *ibid.*

³⁸ *Cong. Record*, 66 Cong., 1 Sess., 4834.

occur if transportation and communication employees should strike. It would be nothing less than treason against the people and the institutions of the United States.

Williams was prophetic when he told his fellow members of the Senate that the capital-labor struggle would sometime in the near future become more acute. He much preferred to fight it out while he was alive rather than to leave the problem for his children to solve. The Senator observed the infiltration of communists and socialists into the ranks of labor, and their growing influence. His legislative record was favorable to labor but not to those radical elements. Through all his public career he had advocated an income tax, inheritance taxes, and other kinds of taxes which fell on the wealthy. The middle class of the country, constituting perhaps 80 per cent of the population, although "unorganized and unthreatening, have some rights." Labor and capital had no right to grind them between the upper and lower millstones. No person had ever successfully threatened Williams, and he did not intend to be threatened by a group of people who had ironclad organizations. Threats from the labor unions would mean no more than those from individuals. He could not forget that his father and forefathers "were gentlemen and independent thinkers."

The Senator fully believed "that this world has got to come to some sort of new arrangement in industrial affairs," but like so many other leaders of that period, he did not know what the new arrangement should be. The spread of civilization could not be satisfactorily carried out under the present industrial set-up. He was willing to co-operate in every way possible in meeting labor's demands as long as those demands were just and right. When there was any question, he favored giving labor the benefit of the doubt, but he was not willing to go to the extent which some radical leaders were demanding at that time. An alarm

should be sounded in the name of the great American middle class, who, as a rule, were passively indifferent. But when once aroused by the unjustifiable methods and tactics used, either by organized labor or by capitalists, the middle class would rise and, if necessary, crush the extremists. The difference between a civilized country and one that was semibarbarous was that the latter had no middle class which was capable of self-assertion, but the former had. He thanked God that all the various little groups, unorganized and unrepresented by any national agency in Washington, had a voice in the affairs of the government.³⁹

When the miners of West Virginia in 1919 threatened to strike because of disagreements between themselves and the operators, Williams felt that it was nothing short of "a conspiracy to commit murder" by freezing American fathers, mothers, and children.⁴⁰ The speaker realized the gravity of the indictment he made. November 1 had been fixed as the date for the beginning of the strike. Customarily the contract between the operators and miners had been from April 1 to April 1, but the coal miners now decided to declare their contract null and void on November 1, instead of waiting until the following April. In this way they hoped to entrench themselves advantageously for bargaining for a new contract with their employers.

The miners were demanding increased wages and shorter hours, coupled with the change of the annual contract to terminate on November 1. Williams saw in that program an opportunity to prevent the people of the United States from having any voice at all in the settlement of any difficulty that might arise. The Senator said that he had no quarrel with the labor leaders, but that the absolute unrighteousness of the methods employed to gain their ends should be pointed out. In industries, transportation, or mines there was one thing higher than either capital or

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 4835-36.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7754.

labor, than employer or employee. The general public was more important, because it outnumbered both the other groups.

On the floor of the Senate, Williams urged the estranged elements to arbitrate their differences. Since neither labor nor capital was entirely right, the government should not please one at the expense of the other, but should bring both of them to compromise. Again, as in the war just closed, he appealed to the mass of the people to aid the government in the suppression of anything that might appear to be unlawful and anything that was disloyal to the American government. "Let the people form unions of their own; . . . let them agree to furnish neither food nor clothing nor drugs nor doctors' service nor legal service nor anything else to either of the mad parties to this blind controversy." ⁴¹

Looking into the future, Williams recommended the organization of an industrial league of peace to which labor and capital must appeal in order to arbitrate their quarrels. The best way of settling our industrial disputes was to "get the capitalists on one side and labor on the other to enter into contracts with one another to abide by arbitration." ⁴²

A bill introduced in the Senate providing for the creation of a board to which industrial disputes were to be referred did not measure up to the qualifications urged by Williams. Instead of having a board composed of labor and capital, he wanted to have a third element, the public, added in such a way as to have an equal representation on the board with the two other groups. In the bill, labor and capital had a membership of four each. Williams wanted four members added to represent the public. A fine of \$500 upon any labor group which hindered or prevented the operation of trains or any other movement of transportation was asked in the proposed measure. The Senator did not say

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Williams to D. R. Hersley, March 25, 1919, in Williams Papers.

how much he wanted the fine raised, but he gave evidence of desiring it to be increased when he said that \$500 was no more than the price of five hundred dozen eggs.⁴³ Williams admitted that if he had any great purpose in public life outside his "determination to be individually honest and fair," it had been to "gain peace for the world, internationally, industrially, and in every other way."⁴⁴ In regard to the railroads and the strike situation, he witnessed the same irresolution and vacillation as in other problems. Everywhere the politicians were marking time and waiting **for something to turn up.**⁴⁵

When the war closed, the United States had something like four million men under arms, more than two million of whom were in Europe. They must be returned not only to the United States and to their respective homes, but, so far as possible, to their former positions. The thousands of men who had been deprived of their normal health while serving their country must be cared for. Military camps either must be retained by the government on a military footing or be allowed to become inactive. They might be turned over to the states for parks or training grounds for the National Guard, or they could be sold to private individuals. Numerous governmental wartime industries must either be operated by the government in competition with **private industries, or be sold.**

Williams favored the reduction of America's military machine as rapidly as possible. He could not share the belief that the United States was endangered by Germany or by any group of nations led by the former militant empire. Would America want to cleave to its traditional policy of retaining in peacetime an army large enough only to protect it in the first stages of a defensive war, or would it want to retain a fighting machine capable of offensive war? The Senator had always favored the former. America could

⁴³ *Cong. Record*, 66 Cong., 2 Sess., 805.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 806.

⁴⁵ *New York Times*, December 16, 1919.

quadruple hundreds of millions of dollars into channels which would ensure a progressive civilization, or it could spend them upon wars for the good of war. Since at no period in American history had the United States been so little likely to be drawn into war as in the period immediately following the close of the World War, he wished to induce the army to spend less. The Senate favored keeping on to serve a large number of officers enough perhaps to provide for training an army of one or two millions men within a few months. In the early years America had an enormous landed reserve force for both branches of its war machine. Judging from the list of the veterans on the pension rolls, the Senate particularly remembered that considerable numbers would be ready to fight for their country at any time within the next fifty years. To those who pointed out danger to the welfare of the United States from Japan and England, the Senate remarked that the other branch of the English-speaking race would soon war against the United States. The English-speaking peoples were the possessors of liberty and freedom throughout the world. "In this case, name, what would we fight Japan for? And on the other hand, why should Japan attack us? Although we 'got her' two times in the Philippine Islands and she is not yet free—much more than we would permit her to get her feet at our feet, that on the European continent," she would not make war upon us because of it. "It is not being afraid of England and Japan working against the United States, he would as soon go out on the ocean and capture Hawaii." "Instead of a proposed pension passed with a year and a half."

Several months later, when the usual appropriation bill came up for discussion, Williams could not resist being repeating many of the things that he had said in regard to the continued support of a large naval armament for the navy.

¹ Williams to R. C. Campbell, Nov. 1, 1901, *ibid.*

² Cong. Record, 38 Cong., 2d Sess., 1902.

It was both wise and necessary for the United States, of all the nations upon the face of the earth, to be a shining example for other nations. With the exception of highly disorganized Russia, the United States was the largest country in the world. In population it ranked above most of the other nations. In patriotism, it ranked foremost. After the war was over, when the world was waiting for someone to begin to disarm, it was not the coward who began the movement, but the brave one. The coward always threw up his hands and exclaimed, "I? Never!" Every other country would make the same demands as the United States for a large navy, and a world-wide naval race that ultimately would result in a naval war would follow. The people behind all of these governments would have to pay taxes in order to maintain any huge naval building program. What would be the outcome of such a policy? Would it lead to peace or make democracy safe or bring happiness to the people? It was the same old policy to which he had himself subscribed in 1915 and 1916. Had he known that the results of the war would be the continuation of an endless rivalry for defense, which "merely means an endless rivalry for armed offense," he would never have taken the position he did. A peace dominated by Prussia would have been better than the continuation of an international armament race for another hundred years.

The Senator raised his voice "against the idiotic, insane, senseless, suicidal mania of rivalry upon the hypocritical pretense of self-defense." Irvine L. Lenroot of Wisconsin advocated an American navy strong enough to "bottle up" the navy of any other nation.⁴⁸ Miles Poindexter of Washington wanted the United States to have a navy equal to that of any other power.⁴⁹ Williams was frank to say that England should have the largest navy in the world. Because England did not grow enough food for her people, her life depended upon keeping the highways of the sea open. The

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 67 Cong., 1 Sess., 1903-1907.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1843.

United States raised enough food to sustain her people. Food, then, was the basis of England's necessity for a large navy. If a second argument were needed, he would quote Rudyard Kipling and say that England had a "far flung battle line." If the United States had as much as 70 per cent of the naval strength of England, she would have an advantage, because England had to keep her navy in so many different seas.

When any nation made warlike preparations, it aroused jealousy, fear, and enmity among other peoples. It was dangerous to arm oneself powerfully without much deliberation. Give a nation the strength, and there would come with it the temptation to use it. Give it the power of a giant, and, in all probability, there would come the brutality of the giant.

O, it is excellent

To have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous

To use it like a giant.

Various Senators wanted the United States to have superiority. Williams pointed to her supremacy for the past forty years in manhood and womanhood, in greater intelligence and industry. These were the measure of the leadership of the people whom he loved and of whom he was a humble part. Being first in these things meant the advancement and elevation of the world. Superiority in armament meant wars, destruction, chaos, and ultimate ruin. The only naval strength we needed was a force strong enough to keep anybody from landing on our coasts. All other appropriations made for either army or navy meant future wars.⁵⁰

During the years of readjustment the questions of disarmament and tariff had a direct bearing on the international situation. That European indebtedness to the United States was vitally affected by American tariff walls was a fact that many overlooked in stressing domestic condi-

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1843-1911.

tions during the debates which followed the war. Even before Harding's inauguration in March, 1921, the Republicans endeavored to remedy the evils of economic maladjustment with their customary panacea for all disorders, the tariff. In practically all cases of emergency, Williams declared, they had "tinkered with the tariff." They saw in every crisis an excuse for revising the customs duties upward.

American farmers, as a group, were receiving a greatly decreased percentage of the national income after the war. Republicans, oddly enough, would use the tariff to raise the farmer's income. Williams poked fun at this innovation. Everyone knew that the tariff was the means through which the manufacturers had robbed the farmers all these years. Now the Republicans had the audacity to face the farmer with the proposition that an increased customs schedule would aid him in securing a larger proportion of the nation's income. Williams wanted it understood that he was not endeavoring in any way to filibuster against the proposed measure, but he did want the Senate and the country to know how he felt. According to the Senator, he was the only man in the Senate whose post-office address was out in the country on a star route. He lived on his plantation. With a few exceptions, every dollar that he had came from the farm. He thought he could speak for the farmers with more familiarity than anyone else in the chamber.

Suppose he were to accept the argument set forth by his Republican friend, Senator Joseph McCumber, and believe that the farmer would receive more for his products through the enactment of a high tariff? He had always maintained that the tariff was robbery. Was he now, in the closing years of his public life, to advocate committing a deed of robbery just because it would enhance financially his future, when he had opposed it for years because it enhanced unethically the future of others? "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" It was stupid for a nation to make economic

war upon another nation through tariff instead "of leaving things where God intended that they should be left." Every man should be allowed to produce the highest quantity at the cheapest price and sell it with the least economic hindrance to another man who could produce other things under similar conditions.⁵¹

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 66 Cong., 3 Sess., 2541-43. The Jackson *Daily News*, February 16, 1921, characterized the speech as one of wit, sarcasm, and masterly logic. The Emergency Tariff Act passed the Senate in February. Because of obstacles, it failed to become a law until the special session that began on April 11. Not until May did the measure become effective. It raised duties on farm products, sugar, and wool. Foreign dumping was prohibited, and the American chemical industry was protected.

Chapter XVII

LAST YEARS IN THE SENATE

THE Harding Administration began in 1921 with a special Senate session of eleven days, March 4-15. Williams knew that nothing of importance would present itself except the confirmation of the President's appointments, and he remained at home until the opening of the special session of Congress on April 11. He wrote Penrose that if at any time the junior Senator from Mississippi, Pat Harrison, wanted to make an objection to an appointment on the grounds of dishonesty or incompetency, the Pennsylvanian was to observe the existence of his pair with Williams. The aging statesman said that he wanted to give the new Chief Executive a chance to make good. He knew the necessity of an Executive's having moral support, both personal and political, for an Administration to be a success. Williams, a Democrat, did not intend to throw any monkey wrenches into the majority machine. He was not asking any favors from the Republican Administration, nor did he believe he was granting it any favors. He simply did what he thought was "absolute justice."¹

Legislative responsibility had been shifted from the shoulders of the Democrats to those of the Republicans. It was noticeable that Williams, once more in the minority, was enjoying life at its best. He was in much better health than he had been for some time.² At the beginning of the special senatorial session, the Democratic caucus of the

¹ Williams to Boies Penrose, March 5, 1921, in Williams Papers.

² Jackson *Daily News*, March 7, 1921.

Senate had authorized Oscar W. Underwood to name seven members to the Steering Committee. Underwood named Williams as one of the seven, but the Mississippian refused to journey to Washington to attend any of its meetings. He requested that, if he could vote by proxy, Harrison be allowed to cast his vote; otherwise, Underwood, the chairman of the committee, was to cast it.³

With the Republicans in power in both houses of Congress, there arose the problem of shifting committee personnel. Conservative Republicans, anticipating trouble with the progressive members of their party, were maneuvering for dominance by their faction. They wanted to decrease the number of Democratic members on all committees to the lowest possible number in keeping with the partisan membership of the Senate.

Democrats, of course, wanted to retain as many members on the various committees as the Republicans would permit. In two speeches, on April 13 and 18, Williams appealed to the Republicans' sense of fairness, asking that they permit the Democrats to retain at least a working minority on the various standing committees of the Senate. He stated humorously that he did not know why he was appealing to the fairness of the Republican party, that it was the most foolish and absurd thing he had ever done, because he had never known Republicans to possess the quality of fairness. The Mississippian could not refrain from throwing a dart at his Republican friend, James E. Watson. He pointed out that the whole world was in turmoil. Problems of immense significance faced all the nations on earth. Nevertheless, "here is the little Republican Party in the Senate of the United States looking at itself in self-admiration, wondering if it is not the whole planetary system, wondering if it is not even the whole solar system, and not seeing that there are other solar systems outside of that. Meanwhile Indiana

³ Oscar W. Underwood to Williams, March 5, 1921; Williams to Underwood, March 13, 1921, in Williams Papers.

politics run the Senate of the United States, and if God ever witnessed anything smaller than Indiana politics on both sides, He must have used a microscope." Williams predicted that the Democratic minority plus a minority of the Republicans would combine to form the real majority of the Senate membership. Sectionally, it would be the South and West in combination against the North. This bipartisan majority would succeed in obstructing the enactment of measures of the Administration unless the conservative element of the party should be very careful in its demands.

Williams asked again for fairness in the distribution of membership on the various committees. But the Republican steam roller was about to start. When Frank B. Brandegee stated that the Republicans had begun to smooth things out a little, Williams criticized him as approving something even worse than a steam roller; steam rollers were not so thorough.⁴

A young editor in Mississippi wrote to Williams and enclosed a pamphlet entitled "The Pace That Kills," a "symposium of opinions from prominent men." Williams frankly did not care to read it because he had read too much of that "sort of stuff." A man, like a plow, could "rust into inefficiency more quickly than he could work into it."⁵ Williams may not have taken very seriously the advice given by his friend, but it was not long before he was acting in accordance with the suggestion. Within a month, he wrote to Harrison that he was "getting tired of political work of every description," and was going to shift most of the burden to him. "I don't feel prepared . . . to take the laboring oar . . . though I will assist as second oarsman."⁶

Congress continued in session throughout the summer. Mrs. Williams became sick and decided that Washington was too hot. In the latter part of August the Senator jour-

⁴ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 1 Sess., 213-15, 401-403.

⁵ Fred Sullens to *id.*, April 22, 1921; Williams to Sullens, April 24, 1921, in Williams Papers.

⁶ Williams to Pat Harrison, May 31, 1921, in Senator Harrison Papers.

neyed with his wife to the mountains of Tennessee, near Monteagle. They remained for several weeks with their daughter and son-in-law, Judge and Mrs. E. R. Holmes. Even in the mountains the Senator was not free from invitations to make speeches. He was asked to make an address at the University of the South, where his grandson was in attendance. He had recently visited Sewanee to enroll his grandson, but he found it impossible to return to make the address.⁷ With the advent of cooler weather in November, the Senator and his wife returned to Washington, where Congress was still in session.

After the rejection of the proposal for adherence to the League of Nations in March, 1920, the Senate enacted a resolution declaring the state of war between the United States and Germany at an end. Wilson vetoed the resolution, as Williams had hoped he would do, and the United States was still officially at war with Germany when the Republicans came into power. A resolution was soon drawn up and presented to Congress. It merely declared a condition which had existed since November 11, 1918, that hostilities between the United States and Germany had ceased.

With the discussion of this resolution before Congress, Williams gave utterance again to his loyalty to a cause, which, although defeated, he never considered lost. The principle of the League of Nations would always exist because it was the philosophy of God and the teaching of Jesus. Every Christian, if he prayed at all, prayed for the principle involved in the League of Nations idea. "Thy will be done, thy Kingdom come on earth." No election by the American people could kill such a movement. The Republicans had crucified Wilson, but the cause would resurrect itself. Williams believed in the resurrection of his Lord and Saviour. As surely as there was a God in history, He was in support of international peace. That ideal would finally

⁷ *Id.* to J. S. McNeily, August 25, 1921; A. W. Knight to Williams, September 14, 1921; Williams to Knight, September 15, 1921, in Williams Papers.

triumph because it was right. All right ideals ultimately triumphed because God was right, and God reigned.⁸

If only President Harding had had a well-defined foreign policy when he was inaugurated, Williams would have been happy. The reaction was such, however, that the President and the Secretary of State, Charles E. Hughes, for a time, completely ignored the existence of the League of Nations. According to Williams, Lodge had stated on the floor of the Senate that a separate treaty with Germany would be one of the most disgraceful things that America could contemplate. Yet, within a few months after the party of which Lodge was a recognized leader had come into power, it enacted a separate treaty.

When the resolution was up before the Foreign Relations Committee, Williams stated that he would support it, but after it reached the floor, the Senator gave notice that upon more thought he had decided that the treaty was of such a nature that it nauseated the "stomach of his sense." Williams had arrived at the same conclusion that Lodge earlier had stated upon the floor, believing it very disgraceful to enact such a separate treaty without consulting in any way the other nations with whom America recently had fought in the war. The Senator said that the United States might just as well face the music. It was impossible for America to isolate herself from the affairs of Europe. More and more in the future the United States would have to take an active part in European affairs. Thought had become international.

During this discussion of the proposed treaty, Williams referred to the Far Eastern question. There was entirely too much talk about Japan's penetration of certain parts of the Far East. Let the Japanese go where they wished. America might limit Japan by prohibiting her citizens from coming to the shores of America, and by preventing her peaceful penetration into the Far East from assuming gov-

⁸ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 1 Sess., 863-64.

ernmental, militaristic control. Otherwise, the Japanese should be permitted to travel as they chose.⁹

Again and again during these remarks the Mississippian stressed the ideal of some form of international organization supported by force. Taft, Root, Hughes, and others prevailed upon the League to Enforce Peace to compromise on the enforcing provision, Article X, of the League Covenant. Williams believed the stand to be a "most untimely announcement of a most unfortunate weakening of purpose," and sent in his resignation.¹⁰

Although the Republican Administration officially ignored the League of Nations, it supported this organization in part with positive action for world peace by calling some members of the League to meet in the Washington Conference in the fall of 1921. Williams agreed with President Harding, in so far as these conferences were concerned, in believing that "Secretary Hughes' proposal was a blow between the eyes to every selfish, militaristic faction and to every interested munition faction in the world."¹¹ The President was pleased to know of Williams' "approval of things thus far done in seeking to make sure of world peace and reduce the burden of armament." Harding was sure that his Administration would not try to accomplish anything which Williams did not cordially approve, and he hoped to accomplish those things which would enlist his "enthusiastic support."¹²

Writing to Underwood, the Democratic member of the American Commission of Four to the Disarmament Conference, Williams outlined a program which he believed would guarantee the peace of the world. The disarmament conference was doing well. Much good was being accom-

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5803-5805.

¹⁰ Williams to William H. Stout, March 25, 1921, in Williams Papers. This letter, though not the original one of resignation, asserts that the Senator's resignation occurred a few days earlier.

¹¹ *Id.* to Warren G. Harding, November 15, 1921, *ibid.*

¹² Harding to Williams, November 18, 1921, *ibid.*

plished. There was yet, however, a great deal of work to be done if the world were to be "saved from bankruptcy and persistent social disorder and financial chaos." The essence of the European situation was that France must be made to feel secure from German attack and that Germany must realize that attack was useless. To bring about such a psychological condition, the United States should agree with England to keep a few thousand troops near the French border. Ten thousand American troops would be adequate—just enough soldiers to bear the American colors and to let both the Germans and French know that the American colors were there with those of France. Williams' plan was to have a definite period of time, not over fifteen years, for American troops to occupy a place on the German borderland.

France must disarm. She could not expect Germany to remain quiet while the military machine of France remained on a wartime basis. In order to encourage France to reduce her army at least 50 per cent in the near future, Williams sought the resurrection of a French Security Treaty which had been defeated earlier, a treaty between France, England, and the United States, which guaranteed French security. It was absolutely absurd to talk about world peace as long as France remained armed. It was useless to urge France's disarming when her people and her government felt insecure from attack. But Williams saw clearly that continental Europe faced "bankruptcy unless France disarmed on land."¹³

Williams sent a carbon copy of this letter to Lodge, a second member of the President's commission to the disarmament conference. The author of the letter did not believe that it would hurt Lodge to read it; in fact, he entertained "a slight hope" that it might possibly do him good.¹⁴ Lodge personally felt very strongly in regard to France's

¹³ Williams to Oscar W. Underwood, November 23, 1921, *ibid.*

¹⁴ *Id.* to Henry C. Lodge, November 23, 1921, *ibid.*

conditions, although the problem was surrounded with many difficulties. He appreciated Williams' suggestions.¹⁵ Underwood characterized the Senator's suggestions as practical. Something should be done to induce France to reduce her military forces, and thus lift a burden of taxation from the shoulders of her people. Aristide Briand had stated both publicly and privately that France would be very glad to take that step when she was assured that she could do so with security.¹⁶

With the adjournment of Congress on November 23, Williams rushed home to be "with his friends, children, and grandchildren." He remained in Mississippi until after the Christmas season, although Congress began a new session on December 2. Williams would perhaps have remained longer had it not been for the death of his senatorial colleague, Boies Penrose, near midnight on December 31. He expressed keen regret over the death. They had been irreconcilable partisans but warm personal friends.

Penrose and Williams had been paired for a number of years. One day, not long after Williams reached Washington, he walked over to Jim Watson's desk: "Jim," he said, "Penrose is dead, my pair is gone, and I've got to have another one. I don't want any confounded mugwump for my pair. I want just as much of a reactionary as I can find. I want a man who for thirty years, by neither direction nor indirection, has ever been right on any public question, and, by golly, you're my man!" Williams and Watson remained paired throughout the rest of the Mississippian's time in the Senate.¹⁷

An interview given to the press before the Senator started to Washington was full of optimism for the international disarmament conference. Dislike was expressed for the attitude which France had exemplified in the unnecessary

¹⁵ Lodge to Williams, November 24, 1921, *ibid.*

¹⁶ Underwood to *id.*, November 26, 1921, *ibid.*

¹⁷ Watson, *As I Knew Them*, 295.

building of submarines and in demands for a strong standing army. To pursue such a policy would mean that she would lose much of the esteem in which she had been held by the other nations of the earth. Even if the conference did not accomplish very much, it was paving the way for a more permanent peace.¹⁸

Just a few weeks earlier, Nicholas Murray Butler had wondered how Williams could be "so persistently optimistic in the face of our repeated disappointments." Our government, the educator lamented, did not respond to nor represent the highest expressions of American life. The world accepted the ideas and expressions of American poets, orators, and idealistic public men as being the true element of the United States. When trying to compare the expressions of our government with the utterances of our more idealistic, altruistic minds, the world recognized that our government did not assume the political responsibility pointed out in the highest aspirations expressed by Americans.¹⁹ On the previous day Williams had set forth his views in a five-page letter to Butler. Their ideals in international affairs largely coincided, although they differed somewhat on the methods of securing these objectives. Butler and Williams shared "an abiding faith in the American people, and in the assured good will of mankind."²⁰

There should be "some degree of cohesiveness and consistency in our foreign relations," wrote Williams. For a long time he had held that treaties should be ratified by a simple majority in the Senate instead of by the two-thirds majority as the Constitution provided. The President was given the power to make treaties through negotiations, but a minority of only one third could destroy all that had been done. The government often went to much expense in negotiations at home and abroad. No foreign nation could

¹⁸ Jackson *Daily News*, January 4, 1922.

¹⁹ Nicholas Murray Butler to Williams, October 13, 1921, in Williams Papers.

²⁰ Williams to Butler, October 12, 1921, *ibid.*

rely upon American negotiators, nor even upon an American President, as being the authoritative representatives of the government in international negotiations.²¹ The Senator expressed these convictions many times during his public career.

With the treaties before the Senate, some of the Senators adopted the same tactics that had been used against the ratification of the Versailles treaty and the League. They requested the President to submit all material available from the negotiations of the United States with England, France, Japan, and any other nation, which covered the subject matter of the treaties.²² Lodge, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, did not object to this resolution, introduced by Gilbert M. Hitchcock, the ranking Democratic member. It had been presented in a committee meeting and had been tentatively agreed upon there. Williams, a member of the committee, absent during the meeting, heard the resolution on the floor of the Senate for the first time. He objected to it, and moved to postpone its consideration. The Senate had undermined Wilson's international reforms by this means. Williams did not intend to uphold any such policy, either for a Democratic President or for a Republican President. He had never voted for such a resolution when his party was in power, and he would not now with the Republicans in control.²³ Nevertheless, the measure was finally enacted and accepted by the President.

The Senator was misquoted in the press as being opposed to the Four Power Treaty. He was emphatically for the treaty but against the "darned fool resolution that Harding accepted, because it partially emasculated the treaty."²⁴ He expected to vote for the treaty, notwithstanding the resolution, but he intended to oppose all reservations.

²¹ *Id.* to George S. Hoffman, January 25, 1922, *ibid.*

²² *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 2 Sess., 2637.

²³ *Ibid.*, 2637-40.

²⁴ Williams to Fred Sullens, March 6, 1922, in Williams Papers.

On March 14 Williams frankly expressed his views in regard to the Four Power Treaty. Joe Robinson had proposed an amendment which pledged the signatory nations to refrain from aggressive action against all other powers. In the event of a controversy, they were to call into conference nations not signers of the treaty. The Senate rejected Robinson's amendment by a vote of 55 to 30.²⁵ Williams was one of the four Democrats to vote against it. As the Senator arose and requested recognition, he was smiling. He stood for a few moments, surveyed the Democratic members, and then turned to the Republicans. The galleries tittered when Williams exclaimed: "If a Republican President had sent the Versailles treaty to this body three-fourths of you Republicans would have voted for it, including the Senator from Massachusetts [Lodge]." ²⁶ The Democrats smiled approval, but they quickly became more sober when the speaker said: "Now, my friends, . . . is it not about time that we stop partisanship at the coast line?" Williams' plea for nonpartisanship in matters pertaining to foreign relations was described as being in "the homely, lovable Williams fashion." ²⁷

The debate continued. Groups of Irish-Americans, through their central agency in Washington, were sending out "daily news letters" in opposition to the treaty.²⁸ Williams "carried the war into Africa," so far as they were concerned. He rekindled the antagonism which he had shown against these elements several years earlier. Not only were these groups appealing to Senators directly, but they were appealing through members of their groups who held high religious positions in this country. Williams cited a speech by Michael J. Gallagher of Detroit as an example of a Cath-

²⁵ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 2 Sess., 3854.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3855-57.

²⁷ *New York Times*, March 15, 1922.

²⁸ Williams to Miss Jennie Worthington, March 22, 1922, in Williams Papers.

olic's denouncing these treaties. To him as a politician, it seemed best that preachers of the various religions confine themselves to preaching Christ and Him crucified.²⁹

The Senator had resented the Republican tactics of making a partisan issue of the Treaty of Versailles. He held a similar resentment toward the Democrats who endeavored to make a partisan issue of the Four Power Treaty.³⁰ The treaty was ratified, despite the opposition of most of the Democratic Senators. Williams hoped that the people would "overlook the false position which the majority of the Democrats took."³¹

A close observer from Stanford University, David Starr Jordan, congratulated Williams on his "stand for peace in the Pacific, and for helping to prick the infernal bubble which certain elements have been inflating on this coast." He believed that the attitude taken by a majority of the Democrats in the Senate, "especially as voiced by Robinson and Reed," could not fail to have an unfavorable impression upon the future success of the party. "As for [Senator Hiram] Johnson," Jordan said, "one can not serve God and Hearst."³² Robinson was temporarily misled, according to Williams, but he should not be coupled with Reed. The Senator from Arkansas wanted to get even with Lodge and other Republicans, who, for partisan reasons, had defeated the League of Nations. Reed was "against the whole world, even though the whole world may not be against him."³³

Williams' stand on the Four Power Treaty was based upon the belief that it was a step in the right direction. If the United States would not go all the way, by joining an international organization composed of all the nations to

²⁹ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 2 Sess., 3907-10.

³⁰ Williams to Kiwanis Club, Clarksdale, Miss., March 11, 1922, in Williams Papers.

³¹ *Id.* to William W. Venable, April 24, 1922, *ibid.*

³² David Starr Jordan to Williams, March 22, 1922, *ibid.*

³³ Williams to Jordan, March 30, 1922, *ibid.*

perpetuate peace, it was well that it join an organization with a few nations for that purpose. The Four Power Treaty provided, as did the League of Nations, for the exercise of force. This power to enforce its decisions was "first, in public opinion; second, in economic measures; third, in moral force; and, fourth . . . in physical force."³⁴

When President Wilson retired from public life in March, 1921, he went quietly to his home on S Street. He was a broken man, shattered in health, disillusioned in his faith of a lifetime in the American people. He wanted nothing but to be left alone. On November 11 after his retirement into private life, a huge crowd assembled about his home. Among this gathering were many of the President's ardent friends, including Senator and Mrs. Williams. Once his wife was comfortably seated, the "Old War Horse of Democracy," despite his deafness, trudged back and forth among the crowd for the purpose of getting, as well as he could, "the temper and tone of it." He heard many expressions of cordiality, friendship, admiration, and praise from the people for his friend, who did not feel able to make a speech. Williams was impressed with the patience of the crowd, waiting three or four hours for no purpose "except to show good will in the present, faith in the future, and an endorsement" of Wilson in the past. Hundreds of people left their cards at the door. The Senator and Mrs. Williams did not have a social card but they wanted Mr. and Mrs. Wilson to know that they were among the throng and that their heartfelt admiration for the former President was increasing from day to day.³⁵ The Wilsons learned of the Williams' presence among the crowd, but the messenger sent to invite them in failed to find them. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson had to accept their disappointment at not speaking with the Senator and Mrs. Williams, and "to be content with losing what would have been a great pleasure."³⁶

³⁴ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 2 Sess., 4698.

³⁵ Williams to Wilson, November 12, 1921, in Williams Papers.

³⁶ Wilson to Williams, November 11, 1921, *ibid.*

The enactment of an emergency tariff soon after the Republicans came into power brought only temporary satisfaction. Immediately the committees in the House and Senate began studying the problem more intensely with the idea of having a general revision of the tariff along Republican lines. The result of this study was the enactment of the Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act of 1922, in which rates were raised much above those of the Simmons-Underwood measure. The rate revision was in fact the highest in American history. Agriculture, as well as industry, was among the protected lines of business.

When the bill was on the floor of the Senate and its passage was being pushed by Republican advocates, exhibits were brought into the chamber to support affirmative arguments. Among the articles exhibited was a cuckoo clock, which, like most of the articles, was supposed to have been manufactured abroad, shipped into this country, and sold at an exorbitant profit. To be more specific, the clock was declared to be of German make, to have cost ninety-four cents, and to be selling for \$22 at a profit of 2,240 per cent. Just how these clocks could compete with those manufactured in America, unless the American manufacturer were reaping relatively the same amount of profit, was not made clear. While McCumber was forcefully proclaiming the merits of the higher duties in the bill, Williams strolled into the chamber. He walked down the center aisle toward the Vice-President's chair, turned, went over to the Republican side and sat down just in front of McCumber, who was in charge of the bill. On McCumber's desk sat the German-made cuckoo clock. Williams began to tinker with it. McCumber, disturbed by the attention Williams was drawing from the Senators and those in the galleries, hesitated several times in his speech and looked down at the Mississippian. The clock had been tinkered with several moments when "the whole bloomin' thing collapsed, much to the astonishment of John Sharp, and [to] the dismay of

the tariff-makers." The Senators laughed heartily, and the galleries joined in. Williams, as quietly as he had strolled in, returned to the cloakroom.³⁷

As the debate continued, many became conscious that the Republicans were making a mistake. They were compelled to make it, however, because they had to "raise tariff rates to satisfy their campaign contributors." Williams predicted that the increased rates would result in disgust for the general customer. Just as soon as the consuming public realized what an injustice had been done, they would defeat the Republican party.³⁸ Republicans at first pleaded for the Emergency Tariff bill enactment to help the farmer. Williams did not believe that the tariff measure would aid the farmers as a class. The bill was nothing more than protection for American manufacturers. Republicans admitted that they wanted to protect the manufacturer, but said they were mainly interested in helping the farmer. How could a bill be enacted to protect everyone, if it did not tax everyone? Williams was on firm ground when he argued that, with unstable world conditions, no protective tariff, even if it met immediate economic requirements, would be effective twelve months later. His conclusion was that Congress had "better let things work themselves out to some sort of stability."³⁹ Republicans stated that the bill would readjust foreign commerce. They advanced the idea that foreign goods were flooding the American market. Williams pointed out that the word "flood" was selected because it indicated damage. He hoped that cheaper goods would not only "flood" but would "inundate" the American consumer. How could foreign trade be aided by placing taxes upon it? The object of the bill was to lessen international trade, to close foreign competition in order that American manufacturers, especially those who were contributors to

³⁷ Jackson *Daily News*, June 30, 1922.

³⁸ Williams to N. G. Augustus, May 12, 1922, in Williams Papers.

³⁹ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 2 Sess., 5901.

the Republican campaign fund, would be enabled to exploit the home market. Foreign countries would retaliate by enacting similar laws against the importation of American-made goods.⁴⁰

Closely coupled with the tariff was the problem of foreign loans which the Allied nations owed to the United States. As a result of the war, the United States had changed from a debtor nation of hundreds of millions of dollars to a creditor nation of more than ten billion dollars. The entire world was almost bankrupt. What attitude was the United States to take in regard to its debtors abroad? Williams pleaded for leniency and stated that the poorest businessman was the creditor who crushed his debtors. He would have our government settle these obligations at a greatly reduced rate of interest. The principal, he believed, should remain intact. As a rule, Senators from the West and South showed a tendency to make stronger demands of the debtor nations than those from the North and East. Members of both houses of Congress continued to introduce resolutions demanding that the total amount of money owed to us by our foreign debtors be paid. Williams advised giving the Administration plenary power to negotiate for the refunding of the debt. In more than one of his speeches on the tariff question he warned the Republicans that the enactment of any law increasing duties would automatically lessen the chances of the United States' collecting its international debts. It was impossible for the nations to pay us in gold. If we did not trade with them, it would be impossible for them to pay us in any way. How did the Republicans believe European countries could sell us goods and place ten billions of dollars in our Treasury to meet their financial obligations, if the tariff rates were so high as to prohibit international trade?

The Senator believed that most of the countries would meet their financial obligations to the United States. No

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7043.

one expected to receive anything from Russia. Williams proposed canceling the debts of Belgium and Serbia. In answer to a statement that when Belgium was relieved of her obligations to us, Germany would be relieved of an equal amount of her obligations to Belgium, Williams said that he could not connect the two at all.⁴¹ He could see no relationship between the obligations that Germany owed to the Allied nations and their indebtedness to us. There was much in the debts that must go by the board. Party politics, urged the Senator, should not enter into the reparations question.⁴²

Williams was astonished that more Democrats in the Senate did not support him in wishing to give the Chief Executive full discretion in endeavoring to bring about some kind of agreement with each of the debtor nations. Every Senator who voiced opposition on the floor of the Senate lowered the power of the President in dealing with the nations abroad. It was the same objection that Williams had made against the Wilsonian critics during the peace conference. The change of Administrations made no difference to him when a principle was involved. He favored the appointment of a commission to deal with our foreign debtors. That the Administration would appoint honest, capable businessmen, he was certain.

Irvine L. Lenroot of Wisconsin strongly opposed the idea of cancellation of Belgian and Serbian debts advocated by Williams. He would not cancel a penny that any nation owed us.⁴³ Was partisan politics again seeking to rule a foreign policy? Williams thought so, and admitted that no one in the Senate was more partisan than he, but again he assured his colleagues that his partisanship did not go beyond the seashore. He took to task Furnifold McL. Simmons of North Carolina for saying that the Senators on the

⁴¹ Williams to John M. Nelson, February 7, 1922, in Williams Papers.

⁴² *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 1 Sess., 3244-45.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 67 Cong., 2 Sess., 1801.

Republican side preferred this or would have us do that. The debt was a question between "‘gentleman’ nations, who, a short while ago, were fighting for their lives and their civilization." Williams was not willing to demand, Shylock-like, a pound of flesh for the obligation owed us. As far as he was concerned, the question should be treated as one of "honor between gentlemen."

Suppose America should say that she was not going to cancel any of the debts nor permit any decreased payment of the amount borrowed or of the interest, Williams continued. The European nations would probably, under such circumstances, say that they were not going to meet their obligations. They would default. Then what steps would the United States take? Would it have enough army and navy to fight them all and take the pound of flesh? It was best to approach the problem with two things clearly in mind: first, that the United States would gladly accept a revised schedule for the payments of the debts with interest rates decreased; second, that the period and time of payment would be greatly extended into the future.⁴⁴

American history gave England and other European states an example of debt cancellation. Had not the Confederate States repudiated debts of millions of dollars to European countries at the end of the War Between the States? This, Williams vividly described to the Senators.⁴⁵ He did not point out, however, one important difference between those and the debts repudiated by the Allied nations. In the War Between the States, eleven states were fighting against the national government. Their right of secession was never recognized by the Federal government. They were looked upon as rebellious states and later as conquered territory, whereas the Allied nations were independent. They were within their own sovereign rights as nations, and were not fighting any mother country. They were victors in a war in which, if defeated, they might have

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1897-1906.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1906.

lost their sovereignty. The *New York Times* credited Williams with being the only Democratic Senator to support the Administration's program.⁴⁶

A few weeks before the close of his public career, Williams spoke on the War Department Appropriation bill and again pleaded for leniency from the United States as a creditor nation. Personally, he believed in the words of St. Paul, "owe no man anything." France had already begun saying that unless Germany paid her, she could not pay us. England, however, was continuing to meet the agreement upon her obligations. Despite England's promptness, Kenneth D. McKellar of Tennessee made a flowery speech in the Senate, during which he criticized the English. Such methods of cultivating the taste of the voters bored Williams. He thanked God that the habit, so much in vogue in the closing years of the nineteenth century, was becoming rapidly obsolete. Man was of a dual nature. It was to the realms of his nature which were "built in the image of God" that Williams appealed as he urged a different attitude toward our English cousins across the sea. The better side of human nature "always responds to the more generous emotions and the more generous impulses of human nature and will never consent to be bound by mathematical calculations."⁴⁷ The United States had not been an "impartial outsider" but an active participant in the war. She had been endangered as were all other democratic nations.

After the failure of the United States to accept the League idea, Williams, with his thorough knowledge of history and international affairs, anticipated a great armament race. As early after the war as May, 1921, the Senator was becoming pessimistic over the future. Europe was even then making ready for another war, which was inevitable "within the next twenty or twenty-five years." There was no

⁴⁶ *New York Times*, January 21, 1922.

⁴⁷ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 4 Sess., 3305.

way to avoid it "unless the people of the nations were willing to surrender a little of their so-called sovereignty and their much vaunted independence of action for the sake of the brotherhood of man."⁴⁸ With this idea playing in his mind, it was easy for him to be influenced toward friendship to England, not only in regard to the reparations problem but also in relation to other international affairs.

Although of a domestic nature, the question of compensating World War veterans was vitally connected with all postwar problems. As a member of a subcommittee of the Finance Committee, Williams had taken an active part in the enactment of War Risk Insurance. He believed that this innovation would relieve the government of anything like a bonus measure at the conclusion of the war. Williams favored having the government care for those who were in any way physically disabled because of service in the war. He was opposed to any bonus for able-bodied men. He detested the commercialization or capitalization of patriotism. Had he known that once the soldiers returned home, they would organize themselves and march upon the Federal Treasury, he would never have cheered for them earlier.

Williams traced the history of pensions in the United States. In all the wars, the government had responded quickly to take care of those who had been maimed and crippled. It was not until years after a war that the government began to pension soldiers who had participated. Williams recalled to members of the chamber that the southern states, besides paying pensions to their Confederate soldiers for decades, had contributed annually, through the channels of taxation, something like fifty millions of dollars to the pensions of the Grand Army of the Republic.

The Senator had received a number of letters, the contents of which were bitter, personal, and insulting to him because of his stand against the Bonus bill. He would fight the authors of those letters on the floor of the Senate, as he

⁴⁸ Williams to David Starr Jordan, May 9, 1921, in Williams Papers.

had fought others who used such tactics. He urged men everywhere to control themselves, and thus to achieve the greatest victory possible to man.

The soldiers returning from abroad found in the United States several hundred who had been made millionaires by war profits. Those who were material-minded saw that they had lost their chance to become rich by donning the uniform and serving their country. The Senator tried to appeal to them to look up to a higher plane of patriotism, instead of looking down into the gutter at filthy lucre. The men had not sacrificed by going into the army and navy; they had been sanctified. They had consecrated themselves to a noble cause. Such consecration never permitted anyone to be a loser.

Many who read Williams' plea for consecrated patriotism perhaps thought him stupid, if not unbalanced mentally. America had witnessed a great change in public attitude toward patriotism since the days of the Senator's grandmother. She had been told during the days of Reconstruction that she was entitled to a pension as the widow of Captain Sharp, who had fought in the Mexican War. Highly insulted, she had gathered up her skirts, walked briskly to the door, turned, faced her guest long enough to say, "I will have you to understand, sir, that Captain Sharp did not fight for money." America was now too material-minded. Williams' attitude was that of an earlier time.

A characteristic illustration given by Williams predicted very accurately the future of the World War veterans' policy toward the Federal Treasury. A man living in Shreveport, Louisiana, had gone to Bayou Lafourche to fish. He slipped and fell overboard, and was nearly drowned. A man came up in a boat, pulled him out, rolled him over, and revived him. Later the man from Shreveport said: "My friend, you have saved my life. There is nothing I can do for you at any time I am not willing to do. My name is so-and-so, and I live at Shreveport. What is your name?"

"The rescuer said, 'My name to me? I am Jean Lebon.'

"The man from Shreveport said, 'Mr. Lebon, if you ever come to Shreveport, if there is anything in the world I can do for you, let me know what it is.'

"He answered, 'Oh, I am Jean Lebon. I live here. I have a little farm here, and my horses and my cows. I do not need anything from anybody.' "

One day several months later as the man saved from drowning went down the streets of Shreveport, he met Jean Lebon. "He stepped over, with both hands extended, rejoiced from the very center of his heart to see Jean Lebon, and he said, 'Now, Mr. Lebon, I am glad you are in Shreveport. My house is open to you. Is there not something I can do for you?'

"Jean Lebon took off his hat and looked at it. 'Oh!' he said, 'I don't know.'

"The man whom he had saved said, 'A hat! A hat! Let me go and get you a nice hat.' So he went and bought Lebon a great, broad-brimmed hat that cost twenty-odd dollars. He put it on Jean Lebon, and they went down the street and found a favorite wine place, ate dinner, and drank wine. The fellow from Shreveport paid for it all. The next day when he came down the street, there was Jean Lebon, standing near the same place.

"He said, 'Mr. Lebon, I thought you told me yesterday you were going home?'

"Jean Lebon replied, 'Well I was; but after I took that fine dinner with you, I feel sort of lazy, and I stay over until this morning, and this morning I say to myself, "I might meet my friend again." '

" 'I am glad you stayed. Now, is there something I can do for you?'

" 'Well, I don't know,' said Lebon and stuck out his foot.

" 'Oh, yes; a pair of boots! Come right on with me.' " They "went and got a pair of boots with cork soles and steel insteps and Morocco tops."

The next day Jean Lebon was still there. He needed a suit and got it.

Some time after that, Jean Lebon went home. Months later, he came back to Shreveport, and the procedure started all over again. Finally the Shreveport man said to him: " 'Now, Mr. Lebon, I owe you my life; I owe you all that I am and all that I possess. I am willing to give you everything I have, except just enough for me and my wife and children to live on, but I want to ask one favor of you, Mr. Lebon. If ever I come into that dadblamed country of yours again and fall into one of those black bayous and am about to drown and you see it, for God's sake and my sake you let me drown. That is my sole request of you.' "

The Senator urged the American Legion, for God's sake and the sake of the American Treasury, to let the country sink the next time it was drowning and its members went to fight for an idea, to save democracy, to save civilization. "At any rate, we will leave it to God, and if God has no instrument of a higher purpose than you, maybe God will let it sink, too." Ashurst, a western Democrat who often disagreed with Williams, spoke "not the language of hypocrisy" when, at the conclusion of the speech, he expressed regret that the able Mississippian would soon be no more in the Senate forum.⁴⁹

This extensive speech of Williams against the bonus measure was given wide publicity. The tone was much different from that which many had anticipated. It was cited as a "particularly able effort."⁵⁰ A congratulatory telegram from an old friend "operated on" Williams' system "like a mint julep."⁵¹

Williams attempted unsuccessfully to secure an amendment to the Bonus bill providing that no one receiving an income of \$2,000 a year should become a beneficiary under

⁴⁹ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 2 Sess., 9020-23, 9035.

⁵⁰ Paul Wooten to Williams, June 24, 1922, in Williams Papers.

⁵¹ J. W. Wadsworth to *id.*, June 22, 1922; Williams to Wadsworth, June 22, 1922, *ibid.*

the proposed act.⁵² In press interviews the Senator stated that the bill would pass because the members of Congress were "men of ordinary weaknesses and of ordinary ambitions." He hoped the President would veto the measure, but doubted it.⁵³

Soon after the speech delivered on June 23, Mr. and Mrs. Williams went home for several weeks of rest from the arduous toils of official life in Washington. A telegram from Borah, on August 24, urged Williams to return to the Senate. He was badly needed on the bonus problem, "especially if we should be called upon to consider a veto."⁵⁴ It was with a tinge of sadness, one imagines, that the Sage of Cedar Grove once more began his trek to the nation's capital. Mrs. Williams remained at home. Neither she nor her husband expected that Congress would last more than a few weeks.

The measure, as all had anticipated, passed both houses by overwhelming majorities. Contrary to the expectations of many, President Harding vetoed the measure.

On August 29 Williams made a second extended speech on the bonus question, in which he practically repeated his former stand. He applauded the President for his courageous veto, and he thanked God that his own sons were returned to him and their mother safe and sound from the war. But had they been killed, he would not have worn mourning. He would have donned a white suit, because of the virtue of the cause for which they had sacrificed their lives. When they should die, if he were still living, he would inscribe upon their tombstones: "He served in the Argonne; he was at St. Mihiel; or he obeyed the call of his country in the German-American war." The Senator could have no greater hope for his colleagues in the chamber than that they should die for a cause that would sanctify them in dying for it. "Pneumonia will not do it. Tubercu-

⁵² *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 2 Sess., 9232.

⁵³ *New York Times*, May 17, 18, 1922.

⁵⁴ William E. Borah to Williams, August 24, 1922, in Williams Papers.

losis will not do it. Fatigue from listening to Senators' speeches will not do it." ⁵⁵

Coleman Dupont wired congratulations. Williams thanked him for his "consideration and kindness." ⁵⁶ The Hearst papers were critical. Williams was not troubled in the least by any adverse criticism from that source: he knew that if Hearst could have destroyed him "politically, intellectually or perhaps even physically," he would have done so long ago. ⁵⁷

The third and last speech of the Senator from Mississippi in opposition to the bonus measure was delivered on September 20. This bill provided for the payment of a bonus to over four million men, about half of whom had not crossed the American water front. Why did not the bill provide only for those who saw service in France? Politicians knew. Williams answered for them: because they realized that such a bill would not receive much consideration. Not only the men had been included, but also the women who had enlisted as nurses. The latter were not supposed to face any firing. "They never presented their beautiful breasts to the cannon shot of the enemy, and ought not to have done it." Any American man would have been ashamed to permit them to do it. If the bill were confined only to those who saw action in Europe, it would receive Williams' approval. Williams classified himself as just a "blameful Mississippi Democrat, without any embroideries and without any frills, and without any special designation," who was going to stand behind the Republican President as long as he showed courage as in his veto of the bonus measure.

The Senator pointed out a trend of the American government, gathering momentum and sapping the life of the

⁵⁵ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 2 Sess., 11,910-11.

⁵⁶ Coleman Dupont to Williams, August 30, 1922; Williams to Dupont, August 30, 1922, in Williams Papers.

⁵⁷ Max C. Baum to Williams, September 1, 1922; Williams to Baum, September 5, 1922, *ibid.*

republic, of placing heroism and honor upon an equal footing with profiteering and money-making. He warned that America was "gradually traveling on to the old Roman idea of bread and circuses . . . *ad panem et circenses*." He believed with Robert Burns, that the American soldier ought to:

Gather gear by ev'ry wile
That's justified by honor—
Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Nor for a train attendant,
But for the glorious privilege
Of being independent.⁵⁸

Williams had little sympathy for the man who did not want to be independent of his government and independent of other men.

The House of Representatives voted to overrule the presidential veto. The Senate sided with the President and prevented the enactment of the bill. Senator Lodge, the Republican floor leader, voted to override the veto; Underwood, the Democratic floor leader, voted to uphold a Republican President. In the House of Representatives the same situation was true. Frank W. Mondell, the Republican floor leader, voted against the President, whereas John N. Garner, the acting Democratic floor leader, supported him. The two Civil War veterans in the Senate, Knute Nelson and Francis E. Warren, upheld the veto. Practically all Senators up for re-election voted to override.⁵⁹ With the defeat of the Bonus bill, Congress adjourned.

Williams immediately went home. He had been daily wearied and bored with the proceedings that went on in the Senate chamber.⁶⁰ All efforts to drag him away from his farm, once he was there, were unsuccessful. It was not the

⁵⁸ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 2 Sess., 12,978-80.

⁵⁹ *New York Times*, September 21, 1922.

⁶⁰ Williams to Mrs. Helen H. Gardener[Day], September 11, 1922, in Williams Papers.

farm that was holding him at home so much as it was a "formidable pile of books" which he was determined to read. Occasionally, he ventured out of the house "to casually view the cows, the horses, the chickens, the pigs and other embellishments of the plantation," but most of the time the Senator could be found in his library, which he loved so well.⁶¹ He did not know what second childhood meant until he reached the state where he really preferred playing with his grandchildren to doing anything else.⁶²

The President called a short session of Congress to meet two weeks before the regular Lame Duck Session, which was to begin December 4. Williams remained at home during the period. He returned to Washington for the last time early in December, 1922. Mrs. Williams remained in Mississippi. She was not in the best of health, and the Senator hoped "to save a little money" as it was his last session. During the winter he received many social invitations, but he refused practically all of them. He was not more than half well, which, in the Senator's interpretation, meant that he was "just about well enough to take an interest in a book but no interest in strangers."⁶³

During the closing days of Williams' last session, there developed a filibuster on the Merchant Marine or Ship Subsidy bill. The retiring statesman made speeches in the Senate on February 20 and 21. On both days he strongly advocated "bagging the Lame Duck."⁶⁴ The United States was the only democratic country in the world in which, after the people had declared through an election that they did not want certain legislation, a majority of the lame ducks could proceed to enact this legislation for the express purpose of defeating the will of the people. "A Con-

⁶¹ Jackson *Daily News*, October 18, 1922.

⁶² Williams to Mrs. Gardener[Day], September 11, 1922, in Williams Papers.

⁶³ *Id.* to Mrs. Percy E. Quinn, December 11, 1922, *ibid.*

⁶⁴ See Richard L. Neuberger and Stephen B. Kahn, *Integrity; The Life of George W. Norris* (New York, 1937), 262 ff., for a good discussion of the Twentieth Amendment to the Constitution.

gress elected by the people ought to meet just as soon as possible after the election, while the members feel the fresh impress of the people's will and are ready to proceed to function accordingly." ⁶⁵

A majority of the Senate favored the enactment of the Ship Subsidy measure. Underwood appealed to the minority of the Senate to let the majority pass the bill. Williams disagreed with Underwood, although he hated to do so. They had fought side by side in both wings of the national Capitol for many years. The majority in this case included many members who had been defeated at the polls by the people the past November. To Williams the filibuster was not only justifiable, but was also necessary. To enact the bill would be unethical, immoral, and "treason to the spirit of democracy." The lame duck members could not be accurately termed representatives; yet they held the balance of power. They were "misrepresentatives," and as such could not constitute a majority if we were to retain a democratic government. No one strongly contended that the bill had any chance of enactment in the new Congress, said Williams.

Williams' first speech on the filibuster lasted about forty-five minutes.⁶⁶ The Senate remained in session from the middle of the morning until late at night. His last speech was about twice as long as the one on the previous day. He reviewed such topics as America's altruism in international relations, the greed of the white race, and the fickleness of Negro voters. He and Borah engaged in repartee several times during the debate.⁶⁷ When John Sharp Williams took his seat after this effort, he had concluded his career in the Congress of the United States. A day or so later, even before Congress had officially adjourned, he slipped quietly

⁶⁵ Williams to Woodbridge N. Ferris, December 23, 1922, in Williams Papers.

⁶⁶ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 4 Sess., 4093-95.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 4174-76.

out of Washington and started on his way to Cedar Grove. The forums in both ends of the Capitol, in which he had for thirty years ably defended the rights of the people, were to hear his voice no more.

Chapter XVIII

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

THE essentials of an ideal home, according to Williams, were "a shelter to keep the rain out, fuel enough to keep warm in winter, and a good wife with well behaved children."¹ Certainly Cedar Grove fulfilled these conditions for him. Over and over again he painted delightful pictures of it and of the happy life there. If he wrote in spring, he described the beauty of the rose garden, the myrtle trees, and the spacious lawns.² In autumn he pictured the charm of harvest fields, the crackling of wood fires in old-fashioned fireplaces,³ the sheep and cattle seeking shelter or warm places behind windbreaks, or the Scotch collie puppies getting "all in a bundle" at night.⁴ His home, with all its memories of his grandparents, his mother, his youth, his young married life, his children, their marriages, his grandchildren, was very dear to him. He expressed to his son the hope "that the old home will be in the family for many generations."⁵

Even in the prime of his public life, he liked best to be at his grandfather's old place, among the cedars filled with bird songs. Here he was no longer bothered with the pavements and the constant treading to and fro upon them; here he ceased politics and statesmanship and proclaimed philosophy. The nearer he got to God and nature, and the farther

¹ Williams to H. K. Bryson, January 19, 1916, in Williams Papers.

² *Id.* to Miss Lucile Banks, May 6, 1919, in possession of Miss Banks.

³ *Id.* to *id.*, November 6, 1917, *ibid.*

⁴ *Id.* to Mrs. Upton Sinclair, November 5, 1917, in Williams Papers.

⁵ *Id.* to John Sharp Williams, Jr., July 26, 1916, *ibid.*

away he got from man, the more of an individualist he became. In this environment his dominating thought was that everything worth-while was in the relationship between him and God and nature.⁶ Any concern with other men, so it seemed, would be to prevent them from trespassing on his rights while he kept the solemn duty not to trespass upon theirs.

Life at Cedar Grove was always affectionate and kindly. For more than fifty years John Sharp and Betty Williams were companions and sweethearts. All along the way they worked together. When Williams was retiring, his friends thought he would soon become bored with the quiet life at Cedar Grove. Among the answers that he gave was the statement that he and Mrs. Williams were not too old to love each other.⁷ To the end of his life, she was beside him. He called her affectionately his "bedroom philosopher"⁸ or his "little Puritan."⁹

In later years, he often recalled incidents from his association with his children when they were young. He was fond of drawing illustrations of points in his speeches from such incidents. Of such stories, perhaps his favorite was the one in which his little daughters were engaged in an argument. It seems that Julia wanted something that she couldn't get; whereupon, Sally, who envied her sister's curly hair, reminded her: "Well, you can't have everything and curly hair." Another favorite was the time when one of the Negroes at Cedar Grove told Julia that she surely did resemble her father. Julia did not look particularly pleased, and the darkey immediately added: "But, Miss Julia, you sho' do out favuh him."¹⁰

Williams frequently joked about having the "Southern-er's complaint, too few dollars—which is always sad—and

⁶ *Id.* to Mrs. Sinclair, May 8, 1915, *ibid.*

⁷ *Id.* to Mrs. Lilley T. Caldwell, February 1, 1923, *ibid.*

⁸ *Id.* to J. W. McGroth, February 28, 1921, *ibid.*

⁹ *Id.* to Robert W. Banks, December 31, 1916, *ibid.*

¹⁰ *Id.* to D. C. Colcock, December 1, 1916, *ibid.*

too many children for the dollars." He always went on to add that of course he did not consider the too many children a misfortune, but that the two situations did not go well together.¹¹ The bond between him and his children was never loosened. He was always concerned for their welfare and interested in their plans; yet he tried to encourage them to live their own lives. "I have tried to raise my children to be free," he once remarked.¹²

He was interested in the progress of Cedar Grove, which came under the care of his son John Sharp, Jr. The son appreciated the help which his father had rendered him in getting established and promised that someday he would repay his father "in the satisfaction of knowing that I am succeeding on the old place."¹³ While Allison was at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, his father rendered him every possible aid. When the young man came home for a summer vacation, he was given the money with which to try his training by building an electric plant for the near-by agricultural high school and the plantation.¹⁴ Kit's period of study of law at the University of Virginia reminded Williams of his own student days there. When the boys were out of school, their father helped them get positions if he could, but he always refused to let his sons use his political influence to get what they could not obtain through their own merit and training.¹⁵

His relationship to his daughters was just as intimate. He shared their plans—whether they related to schools or to weddings. He did not enjoy seeing his daughters leave him through marriage, but he would no more have thought of dictating to them on that score than on any other. He once revealed his cure for despondency at the time his daughters

¹¹ *Id.* to Mrs. Daisy McLaurin Stevens, October 4, 1916, *ibid.*

¹² *Id.* to W. G. Brantley, December 7, 1916, *ibid.*

¹³ John Sharp Williams, Jr., to Williams, July 24, 1916, *ibid.*

¹⁴ Williams to Richard C. MacLaurin, February 17, 1916, *ibid.*

¹⁵ *Id.* to Robert W. Williams, August 25, 1920, *ibid.*



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VIEW OF THE GABLE END OF THE ORIGINAL HOUSE AT CEDAR GROVE

were married. He was at the wedding of the daughter of a friend, and the father of the bride came up to him and said: "Mr. Williams, this is the first time I have ever had a daughter married. What did you do when yours got married?"

"I know just one thing that will do any good," Williams replied. "When Sharp and Sally were married, I got full and stayed full a week. When Julia was married I repeated the same operation and continued thus for three weeks."

His friend was shocked at the moment, but the humor of the situation finally dawned on him. When Williams found that the prescription had not been followed, he added, "It would not have done him any good if he had."¹⁶

He never tired of teasing his children about their children, or recounting the achievements of the grandchildren. Pauline, the daughter of John Sharp, Jr., was a source of joy at Cedar Grove. Williams wrote that she was a "sight to see" as she romped with eight Scotch puppies, who were as fat and healthy looking as she.¹⁷ Little Pauline's grandfather delighted in telling about the occasion when she was preparing for a Hallowe'en and birthday party, both. She led her grandfather to a dark closet in the hall to look at the jack-o'-lantern. Later she told her grandmother, "I know Grandpa was scared, 'cause he dropped my hand."¹⁸ Polly's birthday was not far from that of her grandfather. On one occasion when they had a joint birthday dinner, she became very excited and could not understand why she had only six birthday candles on her birthday cake and her grandfather had sixty-six on his.¹⁹ He remarked that Sally, who married Lieutenant Joel W. Bunkley of the United States Navy, imagined that her baby would soon be an admiral from the way she went on about him. In fact, Sally's baby,

¹⁶ *Id.* to Mrs. Edwin F. Lipscomb, November 3, 1917, *ibid.*

¹⁷ *Id.* to Miss Lucile Banks, November 6, 1917, in possession of Miss Banks.

¹⁸ *Id.* to Miss Mary Heath, October 22, 1920, in Williams Papers.

¹⁹ *Id.* to Clay Sharkey, July 30, 1920, *ibid.*

Billy, according to Williams' account of the situation, must have been an infant prodigy.²⁰ He was showing his "prodigious nature by being able to take his meals regularly, smiling contentedly and even sometimes laughing when he had gotten a plenty."²¹ A few years later Billy's grandfather visited him in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and, upon returning to Washington, wrote that the youngest "neither stopped his feet nor closed his mouth during my visit except during sleep."²²

One account of Kit ran thus: "Kit is down at the University of Virginia with his young wife. He is studying law, the baby is studying tricks, and his wife is worshipping the baby."²³ He wrote often of "Little Julia," whose birth had brought death to his Julia. It was little short of miraculous "the way Betty and a superb English nurse brought out the once fragile, pitiable looking little prematurely-born thing of thin, pink skin and bone."²⁴ Williams wrote on one occasion that he was enjoying "the happiness of a second childhood, building a log cabin playhouse for the children—an old fashioned [log cabin], two rooms with a passage between and a quite rustic porch, with more than rustic banisters and porch seats."²⁵

His understanding of children and young people was remarkable. Even when he was busy in Washington, he took time to be their friend. One day a group of young people from one of the schools in Washington came to see him. He took them to lunch in the Capitol, and, during the course of the conversation, agreed to adopt them all as his grandchildren. When the students wrote him their thanks for the luncheon, he wrote back that "the grandchildren were lovelier than the occasion." He added that he was going to

²⁰ *Id.* to Mrs. Harriet Keblinger, February 9, 1917, *ibid.*

²¹ *Id.* to Mrs. W. S. Green, February 13, 1917, *ibid.*

²² *Id.* to Miss Annie F. McCradle, January 30, 1923, *ibid.*

²³ *Id.* to Mrs. Maggie Gooch, February 6, 1920, *ibid.*

²⁴ *Id.* to Miss Lucile Banks, May 6, 1919, in possession of Miss Banks.

²⁵ *Id.* to William Horlick, Jr., November 9, 1915, in Williams Papers.

take all their letters to Mrs. Williams and "surprise her with the marvelous and unexpected growth" of her family.²⁶

He knew the secret of winning young people's confidence and getting close to them. He wrote to a young friend at Mary Baldwin Seminary, the school which his wife and daughters attended, and invited the girl to write to him about any problem that she wished regarding her school life. He reminded her that when she was only nine years old, he had adopted her as his sweetheart. "Now don't you try to write a stilted, literary letter," he warned her. "When you answer this letter, you make out that I am two or three years younger than you are and write me in that vein."²⁷

Williams possessed a "quick eye to discern the aspiration of another and to give him encouragement."²⁸ When a young man in his employ proved his ability, he was soon promoted to a higher and better position. Hugh S. Martin of Meridian within five years demonstrated to his employer that he was capable of serving efficiently as secretary in a more important field.²⁹ He was sent to Petrograd as secretary in the American Embassy.³⁰ Regardless of whether or not the young person placed in a position was a former employee, Williams made it a point to keep in contact with him. It was through Williams' influence that Norval Richardson of Vicksburg entered the diplomatic service.³¹ For several years this young Mississippian had a highly successful career in the consular service before he went to the American Embassy in Rome under Ambassador Thomas Nelson Page.

With each passing generation, there are always some who seek to establish themselves as critics of the succeeding gen-

²⁶ *Id.* to Miss Elsa Rothrock, March 14, 1918, *ibid.*

²⁷ *Id.* to Miss Mildred S. Gates, January 30, 1923, *ibid.*

²⁸ Mrs. Eron Rowland to Williams, June 4, 1915, *ibid.*

²⁹ Williams to William Phillips, June 29, 1916, *ibid.*

³⁰ J. M. Burlew, secretary to Williams, to Oscar Wilkinson, January 3, 1917, *ibid.*

³¹ Norval Richardson, *My Diplomatic Education* (New York, 1929), 3-6.

eration. These detractors hark back to the good old days of their youth and denounce young people as worse in every respect than the generation preceding. Williams, however, possessed an optimistic faith in youth. "The new generation will know what we knew and a good deal besides; will build upon what we built and will build still higher." No, the young people would not fall short of the old ones. One reason God permitted death was to get rid of the old men, who were devoid of progressive ideas, so that younger men would take their places, "in order that the world could go ahead."³²

He could be firm with youngsters, though, when he thought a reprimand might do them good. On one occasion he received from a young namesake a letter and a tailor's bill for fifty dollars. It seems that years earlier when the young man was a mere baby, Williams had promised the boy's father that he would get the boy a suit of clothes someday. The young man proceeded to get a tailor-made suit and to send the bill to Washington. Williams, after wiring to a friend in Sallis, Mississippi, to substantiate identification, promptly informed the young man that if he were giving the suit, he would himself choose how much it should cost. Furthermore, he told the boy that he had never paid that much for a suit in his life. He ended the matter by sending twenty-five dollars, telling the young man to pay the rest himself, and admonishing him: "Never under any circumstances to order anything at another man's expense and send him the bill without first consulting him as to what the bill shall be."³³

Incidents like the above indicate one side of the Senator's relationship with people, but there is another side. For every person writing to beg something from the Senator, there was someone who sent him a thoughtful gift. Williams received all kinds of presents from Mississippians—

³² Williams to Samuel A. Neville, February 28, 1919, in Williams Papers.

³³ *Id.* to John Sharp Williams May, May 5, 1915, *ibid.*

from cantaloupes to Hawaiian pineapples. He was never too busy to send a note of gracious thanks. Perhaps the most interesting gift he received was a pair of swans presented to him by William Horlick, of the Horlick Malted Milk Company of Racine, Wisconsin. The swans made a beautiful picture as they floated on the lakelet nestled in a curve of the winding road which leads from the public highway to the home at Cedar Grove. Unfortunately, one of the swans was killed by some sort of wild animal, and the other sickened and died.³⁴ When Mr. Horlick learned of the misfortune, he immediately sent another pair.³⁵

A quality even more rare and endearing than his capacity for appreciation was Williams' ability to help needy friends with a gentle generosity that kept them from feeling embarrassment. One day he heard that an old friend was in hard circumstances. He immediately sent a check for twenty-five dollars with the message that the recipient was remembered as an old and dear friend who could never be repaid for the service rendered to a young politician early in his career; he wished only that he could express sympathy in an easier, sweeter way than with money.³⁶ Another typical message was simply that he had heard of his friend's illness and thought he might need a little money.³⁷ Usually Williams did not expect his generous gifts to be repaid, and told the recipients that if the money were never returned, it made no difference. "Money, after all, when you have taken out of it enough for yourself and your family to live on, is good for mighty little else than to help your friends."³⁸

There was the case of Charles Lee and his family, who resided in Jackson. Williams claimed that he and Charlie Lee were almost like brothers in their social relations.³⁹

³⁴ *Id.* to William Horlick, March 27, 1922, *ibid.*

³⁵ Horlick to Williams, May 16, 1922, *ibid.*

³⁶ Williams to J. Shelton Busby, April 28, 1916, *ibid.*

³⁷ *Id.* to Peter Lawless, February 27, 1919, *ibid.*

³⁸ *Id.* to Charles A. Edwards, May 7, 1914, *ibid.*

³⁹ *Id.* to Julian P. Alexander, May 8, 1915, *ibid.*

When Lee died in 1915, while serving as United States District Attorney, his family was left in strained financial circumstances. Williams stopped at nothing to render aid to them. He recommended that young Charlie, who had been assistant in his father's office, should be appointed First Assistant District Attorney in order that he might take care of his mother and sister. Attorney General Thomas W. Gregory, in whose department the appointment fell, refused to make the necessary recommendation to the President. The affair completely ruptured cordial relations between Williams and Gregory.⁴⁰ For a time there was danger that even his friendship with President Wilson would be spoiled over the matter, and he went so far as to threaten to resign his seat in the Senate if the matter were not satisfactorily adjusted.⁴¹ The difficulty was not cleared up, however, and Williams turned elsewhere to find help for the Lee family. He finally managed to get an appointment for the daughter by persuading the President to waive some of the Civil Service requirements. He wrote the girl that she could credit everything he had done for her to her father.⁴²

One of his dearest and oldest friends was Robert W. Banks, of Meridian and Gulfport. For a generation, Banks helped Williams to remain in public life. As a writer of some renown, this friend permitted no criticism to go unanswered. Banks considered any expressed opposition to Williams' public service as a personal affront. For many years the Banks home was a meeting place for leading Mississippi statesmen. Within the walls of that home, Williams spent frequent hours with his friends. When illness and misfortune descended upon the Banks family, they had in Williams a constant source of help and comfort.⁴³ "I don't want you to feel that you are under obligation to me,"

⁴⁰ *Id.* to Thomas W. Gregory, August 2, 1915, *ibid.*

⁴¹ *Id.* to Wilson, August 2, 1915, *ibid.*

⁴² *Id.* to Miss Ella Lee, May 26, 1918, *ibid.*

⁴³ *Id.* to Miss Lucile Banks, December 15, 1917; October 18, 1918; June 13, 1919; July 21, 1919, etc., in possession of Miss Banks.

he wrote Banks just a few weeks before the latter's death. "If you begin to feel that way I will feel embarrassed and won't feel free. You know, I never forgot when I was young and untried and had very few friends that you came to my aid while you were in Meridian and Lauderdale County. I forget a lot of new friends, but I never forget any old ones." ⁴⁴ After Banks died, Williams kept in touch with Lucile, Bob's daughter, in order that he might encourage and help her in any way that he could.⁴⁵

The leading members of the "old guard," as Williams loved to call those who had been his lifelong friends, were LeRoy Percy, Pat Henry, Charlie Humphreys, and Clay Sharkey. He spoke of them as the best friends he ever had, and was always glad to do something for them. When they tried to thank him, he insisted that the balance was on the other side of the ledger.⁴⁶ He depended upon them for advice on Mississippi politics when he needed that information. He valued and trusted their friendships. Of Clay Sharkey he said: "You and I always think so much alike that I sometimes imagine we ought to have been twins." ⁴⁷ "Of course, old friends are dearer than new friends, that is if a man can make new *friends* after sixty-five years of age. They are really apt to be just acquaintances, welcome and dear in a way, but in another sense just entertained on the front porch, they don't exactly get into the real house." ⁴⁸

It was a delight to invite and welcome these friends to Cedar Grove. As the plantation owner once wrote: "We will welcome you, dog, gun, and any friend." ⁴⁹ If the host were notified in advance of an anticipated visit, extensive rural preparations were usually made. In the fall or winter a pig would be killed in order that the guest might enjoy

⁴⁴ *Id.* to Robert W. Banks, July 31, 1919, in Williams Papers.

⁴⁵ *Id.* to Miss Lucile Banks, January 28, 1920, in possession of Miss Banks.

⁴⁶ *Id.* to Clay Sharkey, January 7, 1914, in Williams Papers.

⁴⁷ *Id.* to *id.*, December 20, 1919, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Id.* to *id.*, September 25, 1926, in possession of Mr. Pat Sharkey, Glen Allan, Mississippi.

⁴⁹ *Id.* to *id.*, November 16, 1914, in Williams Papers.

plenty of backbone and spareribs.⁵⁰ If in the late spring or summer, the meat would consist of chicken, lamb, or beef. There was always something to kill that "gets along on either two or four legs."⁵¹ Water and sugar and other "proper ingredients" were usually on hand to be partaken of when the guest desired. Not only were they welcomed, but their visits were extended as long as possible in the interest of friendship.

In 1911 Senator Leroy Percy was before the people of Mississippi for re-election to the United States Senate. He had served only a few months, filling an unexpired term. Many letters came to Williams telling him that, because of local conditions, Percy would be defeated. "Kit" Williams advised his brother that defeat was certain. John Sharp had just begun his first term in the Senate. Under such conditions, he could easily have excused himself upon the grounds of political expediency and explained the situation from this viewpoint to his colleague. This, as Williams saw it, would have been a cowardly act. He left his post of duty in Washington, returned to Mississippi and made speeches in behalf of his friend. As predicted, Percy was overwhelmingly defeated, but Williams suffered no decrease of popularity among the people of his state. Accounts of Williams' activities in this political campaign were carried in both the *Jackson Daily News* and the *Jackson Daily Clarion-Ledger*.

Besides the ties of politics and intimate social relations which held Williams and these gentlemen together, there was the tie of the War Between the States. Throughout his entire public career, Confederate veterans always had a warm place in Williams' affectionate heart. While in the House, no Republican or northern Democrat trampled on the toes of those who participated in the "lost cause" without risking a verbal encounter with Williams. Policies in

⁵⁰ *Id.* to Charles Humphries, November 21, 1917, *ibid.*

⁵¹ *Id.* to Mrs. Rosa Watkins Wells, November 14, 1916, *ibid.*

the South closely connected with the war, or which grew out of the period of Reconstruction, were always ably defended by the planter-statesman. After Williams' elevation to the Senate, when the Wilson Administration became embroiled in the Mexican crisis, a large number of the old Confederate veterans wrote to Williams offering their services in case of war with Mexico. A little later when the United States was drawn into the European war, they renewed the offer. He habitually sent these letters to the President and accompanied them with three requests: (1) the letters were to be returned to him for his files; (2) the President should accept the services of these men if he could find a place anywhere that a man above sixty years of age could serve—Williams realized, however, that it was asking the President to fit a round peg into a square hole; (3) the President was to write a personal letter to each one of these old veterans and express his personal appreciation for the sentiment and patriotism expressed by the superannuated southern veterans.

Early in Wilson's Administration, "the first real Democratic Administration since the War," Confederate soldiers, because of their age, were practically excluded from appointive public office.⁵² In vain Williams urged the President to change his decision.⁵³ Failing at the White House, he turned to members of the Cabinet under whom the appointments were made. "Don't let the urgency of official duty and the constant demand upon your patience and good humor hurt the soft place in your heart, for these old Confederate veterans," he wrote to Postmaster General Albert S. Burleson.⁵⁴ The disappointment of these old fighting Democrats was bitter because they thought the Federal veterans were "by law kept in office even if they had to be wheeled in a chair." ⁵⁵ Despite his pleadings that the gate

⁵² *Id.* to John A. Hook, February 6, 1914, *ibid.*

⁵³ *Id.* to Wilson, April 13, 1914, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Id.* to Albert S. Burleson, August 5, 1915, *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Id.* to Wilson, April 13, 1914, *ibid.*

of party patronage be left open for the thinning grey line, the "powers that be" remained unpersuaded.

During the World War the Confederate veterans held their annual reunion in Washington. Charlie Humphreys and Pat Henry received letters which informed them that they were to be the guests of Mississippi's senior Senator at his home while they were in Washington attending the reunion. Williams thought it would be better to give them one room together "so that there will be no moving to mix toddies, and the sugar and water would be within easy reach of both of you."⁵⁶

A movement was on foot to make Julia the sponsor for the Confederate Veterans' reunion in Washington. The entire Williams family was delighted.⁵⁷ "Julia loved every old Confederate veteran, their very uniform. She idealized them and their cause."⁵⁸ Her marriage prevented the acceptance of the sponsorship, as it was confined to unmarried women. After Julia's death in 1916, the Confederate veterans, at their next reunion, adopted resolutions of appreciation for the interest that she had shown in them and expressed to her family the sympathy of their organization.⁵⁹ Her father highly esteemed these resolutions. "It was fitting that the soul of the gentlest and sweetest of women should meet in unison of sentiment the souls of the bravest and most constant generation of men whom God has this far permitted the world to know, admire, and love."⁶⁰

For years the ranks of the "old guard" had been thinning.⁶¹ The last of them to die was Clay Sharkey, who survived Williams by several years. Williams became deaf, but fortunately retained perfect eyesight until the end. Sharkey lost his sight completely, but partially retained his sense of

⁵⁶ *Id.* to Charles Humphries, April 11, 1917, *ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Id.* to Pat Henry, November 15, 1916, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Id.* to John A. Webb, August 11, 1918, *ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Id.* to Charles Humphries, December 11, 1916, *ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Id.* to Webb, August 11, 1918, *ibid.*

⁶¹ *Id.* to Miss Lucile Banks, January 31, 1917, in possession of Miss Banks.

hearing. During the last years of their lives, letters continued to flow back and forth between these two men, whose friendship extended back almost half a century.

As these old comrades passed away, a group of younger friends began to claim more of Williams' attention. This group, though from fifteen to twenty-five years younger, had known of, or had been acquainted with, Williams for a number of years. They sat at the feet of their political mentor and sought his information, gained his knowledge, but never acquired his wisdom. Outstanding in this group were Pat Harrison, Fred Sullens, and Harris Dickson.

The same day that Williams entered the Senate, a south Mississippi Congressional district sent Pat Harrison, a young man of only twenty-nine years, as its Representative to the House. The new member soon developed admiring friendship for the older statesman. Harrison, politically ambitious, purchased a home on Capitol Avenue, only a short distance from that of Williams on Sixteenth Street, and determined to remain in public life. Vardaman opposed some of the domestic legislation as well as the foreign policy of Wilson's Administration, and Williams determined to use his influence to defeat his colleague for re-election in 1918. After carefully considering several of the prospective candidates in the Williams following, Congressman Harrison was chosen as the opponent of Vardaman. Williams wrote numerous letters to his friends over the state who had formerly aided in political battles and solicited their support against his junior colleague.⁶² That Harrison was successful in this campaign against Vardaman was in no small measure due to Williams' influence. In the closing of Williams' public career, when he became very much disgusted with public life, his associations with his newly elected colleague were a source of pleasure to him. During week ends when Congress was in session, but in recess, Harrison and Williams spent much time together, when the older man talked with

⁶² See Williams Papers for a number of such letters.

and gave advice to his younger admirer and protégé.⁶³ The influence of the senior statesman was distinctly seen in the rapid rise to prominence of the young Senator. Even after Williams' retirement to private life, he remained a willing adviser to Harrison on many matters of statesmanship.

As a promising member of the fourth estate, Sullens had occasion to familiarize himself with the public life of Williams. Socially, their relationship was amiable from the moment of introduction. Their tastes were identical, at least in love of toddies and in fondness for literature, especially Shakespeare. In 1907, Sullens became editor of the *Jackson Daily News*. Under his editorship, this paper became the leading daily of the state. The files are perhaps the most informative public source upon Williams' senatorial career. Many of Williams' speeches were published in full. In nearly all cases, excerpts were printed and editorials written praising his utterances upon the floor of the Senate. If sometime an error was made in regard to press reports in an endeavor to read Williams' mind afar, and Williams wanted these erroneous statements corrected, he merely dropped a hint to the editor. The following day the correction would appear in the paper, with Sullens taking the full responsibility for the erroneous statements or conclusions.⁶⁴ On more than one occasion, advice came to the Senate Office Building from Sullens, urging that Williams take certain action or refrain from so doing. Once when Williams refused to accept an invitation to deliver an address to a Presbyterian Summer School in Jackson, he was urged to reconsider his refusal. If nothing else were accomplished, it might improve Williams' standing with the church folks. He was given this further advice: "This business of being an innocent bystander in religion is very

⁶³ Interview with Kit Williams, October 20, 1937.

⁶⁴ See Williams Papers and files of *Jackson Daily News* for several examples.

risky. We can't afford to always keep our religion in the name of our wives." ⁶⁵

On one occasion when Speaker Champ Clark delivered an address in Jackson, Williams came over to introduce him.⁶⁶ The Senator was invited by Governor and Mrs. Earl Brewer to a dinner, given in honor of the guest, at the executive mansion. Sullens and Dan J. Morrison had arranged with a few other friends to entertain Williams, and took it upon themselves to refuse Mrs. Brewer's invitation, which she had extended through them to him. Sullens wrote Williams what he had done ⁶⁷ and received thanks for the adroit and diplomatic manner in which he had handled the situation.⁶⁸

With the coming of the World War, Sullens, though forty years of age, was exceedingly anxious to do his part. He could not let the biggest event of human history pass without having some active part in it. It would be dreadful to tell his grandchildren, as they came prattling about his knees, that he had not taken an active part in the war. Through the recommendation of Williams to Wilson,⁶⁹ he received an appointment as captain in the Intelligence Division of the United States Army. Before the war closed, he had been promoted major.

Harris Dickson was drawn to Williams, as were many others, by the Senator's scholarly attainments. In 1907, Dickson supported Governor Vardaman for the Senate against Williams, but in time he became an intimate friend of Williams, and, during the nine years of the Senator's retirement, frequently visited Cedar Grove. In 1925 Dickson published *An Old-Fashioned Senator*—a story-biography of

⁶⁵ Fred Sullens to Williams, May 7, 1915, in Williams Papers.

⁶⁶ *Id.* to *id.*, March 30, 1915, *ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Id.* to *id.*, April 9, 1915, *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Williams to Sullens, April 12, 1915, *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Id.* to Joseph P. Tumulty, May 9, 1916, *ibid.* Tumulty was Wilson's private secretary.

John Sharp Williams. Besides this graphically written pen portrait by an admiring friend, Dickson published several articles in newspapers and magazines about various phases of Williams' public career. While Dickson was contemplating writing the biography, he suggested a visit to Cedar Grove. Of course, he would be welcome. All would be glad to have him. If he would only write of his visit a little in advance, the aging statesman was sure he could persuade his son, John, "to kill a pig or lamb and get fresh greens from the garden to eat with the jowl."⁷⁰ He wished he could promise the "real thing," but it was impossible to do so because of the Prohibition Ghost, which was the destroyer of all bliss.

Among those friends who remained dear to Williams were several with whom he was associated during his youth in colleges and universities. Although he was at the University of the South only a few months, his associations with William C. Gorgas, whose father at that time was president of the institution, were so amiable that these two remained friends throughout the rest of their lives. During the years of Gorgas' strenuous, and often disappointing, work in Havana and later in the Panama Canal Zone, he knew that Williams had faith in him and would do anything possible to support his efforts. Several times when Gorgas returned to Washington after a sojourn in tropical America or elsewhere, he and Williams visited each other. In the summer of 1920, while in London, Major General Gorgas died. Before the flag-draped casket reached American shores, Williams had been invited to act as honorary pallbearer at the funeral.⁷¹

Samuel Mehard, Nathaniel French, and Charles P. Kemper were among the stanch friends of Williams' years at the University of Virginia and at the universities abroad.

⁷⁰ *Id.* to Harris Dickson, April 2, 1920, *ibid.*

⁷¹ *Id.* to Captain R. H. Gorgas, August 11, 1920, *ibid.* Captain Gorgas, a brother of the deceased, was given reasons why Williams could not journey to Washington to act in the capacity in which he was invited.

With these three, Williams corresponded extensively for many years. Mehard became a lawyer in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. When business brought him to Washington, he usually came around for a visit with Williams. On one occasion he was in a hurry and failed to see his old friend. During the few moments that he went to the Senate to see Williams, the latter was on the floor making a speech. When Mehard explained why he had not called Williams out of the Senate chamber, Williams wrote that he would have quit making any speech in which he was engaged to chat for a few moments with his friend.⁷² The affection which members of the Williams household held for Mehard was demonstrated by the title which Williams' little "tow-headed granddaughter," Pauline, gave him. She always spoke of him as "Uncle" Mehard and usually sent her love in her grandfather's letters.⁷³

Williams returned from the funeral of Mehard in September, 1919, and wrote a long letter to Nathaniel French in regard to the sad rites, which the latter had not been able to attend. The thing for them and all who had known Mehard to remember was that he had had unusual consideration for the rights, feelings, and prejudices of other people, and had gone through life according to the best and highest definition, always observing the code of a gentleman's ethics.⁷⁴

Kemper lived for years in Vicksburg, Mississippi. If Williams' files are considered as evidence, Kemper became somewhat of a poet. On numerous occasions he sent his compositions to his Senator friend. As Wilson knew Kemper, Williams sent many of these poems to the White House.⁷⁵ Apparently the poet was endeavoring to secure a Federal appointment. On one occasion Williams wrote jestingly to the President: "For God's sake get something for

⁷² *Id.* to Samuel S. Mehard, March 20, 1914, *ibid.*

⁷³ *Id.* to *id.*, November 11, 1916, *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Id.* to Nathaniel French, September 20, 1919, *ibid.*

⁷⁵ See *ibid.*

Kemper and stop this flow of poetry, and equally for God's sake don't tell him that I mentioned that as the reason for finding something for him." ⁷⁶

Williams counted many women among his friends. To Mrs. Lilley T. Caldwell, wife of the Episcopal rector of Yazoo City, Williams revealed his belief in God and the Bible. The only real thing in the world was the spirit, because it was the spirit that lived. He was not sure that he recognized the existence of any devil; at least he had very little respect for him, and had never paid him much attention. He had not shared the familiar idea of the existence of two great spirits, one good and the other evil. He believed that God created the physical body in an indirect way, as He directly created the spiritual body. When God came down and took upon Himself human form in order to teach the spiritual side of life, immortality of the soul, and the indestructibility of the spirit, He showed these revelations while in a physical body. The difference between the physical and spiritual was that the former was governed by unalterable laws, and the latter was ruled by the Holy Spirit's heed of prayers and wishes and by the sympathy of the Great Spirit with the spirit which God had breathed into man. Mere sin did not sacrifice men's souls nor cripple them. If it did, there would be no hope for anybody. Christians, as little children, constantly misbehaved and went to the Heavenly Father for forgiveness and then started all over again. He added that neither he nor anyone else knew very much about those things. His eyes of vision and faith were not so clear as his physical eyes. The man who got up in the morning with the prayer, "Thy will be done," on his lips and went to bed at night with the prayer, "Lord bless everybody," had gone about as far in religious faith as faith and knowledge could carry him. The conscience of the individual was the Divine Spirit within. As long as man per-

⁷⁶ Williams urged the appointment of Kemper as Minister to Greece, but the appointment was not secured. Williams to Wilson, August 1, 1914, *ibid.*

mitted his conscience to talk and listen to its teachings, he was bound to be right in the long run, and just so far as a man silenced his conscience and refused to listen to it, was he literally silencing the voice of God. These opinions were admitted to be very unorthodox; yet they were frankly given. Williams felt certain that God was going to be as good as he himself had been to his children, and he had never seen the day when he could not forgive any one of them after he had had the opportunity to be mad awhile and blow off steam.⁷⁷

One other source of friendship never neglected by a Welshman, especially when he chose the profession of statesmanship, was that of his kindred. In this regard Williams wrote: "Welshmen are as clannish as the devil. I count my kin to the forty-third degree."⁷⁸

When Williams began his political life in Washington, he knew personally no one in politics save those of his own state. Thirty years later as he bade adieu for the last time to the city in which he had lived his public life, he was one of the best liked actors on the political stage of the nation. His friends in public life were chosen, not for accomplishment nor social station nor political affiliations, but for their worth as individuals. He was "not only a Democrat with a big 'D,' but . . . a democrat with a little bit of a 'd.'" Among his friends he counted "ditch diggers and millionaires."⁷⁹ Temperamentally, Williams either loved or hated people; he was not indifferent toward anyone. He hated men because he believed them to be untrue, insincere, and given to camouflage, and he loved them for the opposite qualities.⁸⁰

While a member of the House and of the Senate, Williams showed the generosity of friendship to those of other political faiths. Charles H. Grosvenor of Ohio, one of the

⁷⁷ *Id.* to Mrs. Lilley T. Caldwell, December 15, 1917, and February 25, 1918, *ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Id.* to Mrs. F[lora] C[lark] Huntington, February 8, 1916, *ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 2 Sess., 10,981.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 4190.

four strong leaders of the Republicans in the House during Roosevelt's Administration, once said that Williams was " 'an amusin' cuss' on all occasions." ⁸¹ The Mississippian was always flippant, always funny, and charged with no responsibility but devilment. James E. Watson, another staunch Republican, wrote that he was very happy to say that "in a modest way in the House and in a much fuller way in the Senate" he had entered into a personal friendship with Williams.⁸²

Although Uncle Joe Cannon came to the House of Representatives twenty years before Williams, they served together for sixteen years. Never agreeing politically, they loved each other dearly as friends. Each had saving gifts of wit, humor, and sarcasm which carried an unusual sense of proportion.⁸³ Uncle Joe thought Williams "never more entertaining than when he attended a meeting of the Rules Committee, when he always had a new story that he had kept to tell us." ⁸⁴ Williams delighted in telling an experience that occurred while he was minority leader, and Cannon was Speaker of the House. One afternoon shortly after the beginning of a Congress, the Democratic leader walked into the Speaker's private conference room. Cannon absently-mindedly thought Williams a Republican and began to relate freely to him in confidence about the appointments of Republicans to various committees. About five minutes elapsed before Cannon realized that Williams was the leader of the other side. Upon such recognition, both laughed heartily.⁸⁵

Williams was a constant attendant at Uncle Joe's birthday dinners. In February, 1923, when Williams accepted the annual invitation, he added: "I expect it will be the

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 58 Cong., 2 Sess., 3635.

⁸² Watson, *As I Knew Them*, 288.

⁸³ Alexander, *History and Procedure of the House of Representatives*, 114, 209.

⁸⁴ Katherine G. Busbey (ed.), *Uncle Joe Cannon; The Story of a Pioneer American, as told to L. White Busbey* (New York, 1927), 244.

⁸⁵ Williams to J. Sloat Fasset, July 5, 1918, in Williams Papers.

last opportunity for Uncle Joe and me to swap jokes across the table.”⁸⁶

While minority leader in the House, Williams “took an instant liking to the peppery red-head from Virginia” and named Carter Glass a member of the Banking and Currency Committee. This committee assignment paved the way for the Virginian to become, in time, chairman of that important committee, in which position he was the acknowledged father of the bill creating the Federal Reserve System. For this opportunity to be of real service to the Democratic party and the country, Glass has never ceased to be grateful.⁸⁷ On one occasion, Robert Gates, correspondent for the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, wrote an article about Glass in which he made the remark that “at first glance he is not handsome.” Williams reproved Gates for his erroneous statement by telling him that at first glance Glass was “a blamed sight handsomer” than he ever looked afterward.⁸⁸ While admitting that he had never heeded the scriptural injunction to love one’s enemies, Glass did not mind forgiving a good friend.⁸⁹

When Williams was asked who were his friends in the “sage brush State,” he replied “Key Pittman, the present Senator, and all of his friends.”⁹⁰ Pittman was born in Vicksburg, Mississippi, “and was, in his better days, . . . a Mississippian. He fell from grace by going west when quite

⁸⁶ *Id.* to John W. Dwight, February 2, 1923, *ibid.* For a fuller treatment of the friendship between Cannon and Williams see George C. Osborn, “Joseph G. Cannon and John Sharp Williams,” in *Indiana Magazine of History* (Bloomington), XXXV (1939), 283-94.

⁸⁷ Carter Glass to Williams, December 28, 1918, in Williams Papers; interview with Senator Carter Glass, August 10, 1937; Palmer, *Carter Glass*, 50-52; Glass preferred the Committee on Foreign Affairs but Williams had promised a Mississippian the only vacancy and Glass accepted membership on the Banking and Currency Committee instead. See Rixey Smith and Norman Beasley, *Carter Glass, A Biography* (New York, 1939), 63-64.

⁸⁸ Williams to Glass, December 27, 1918, in Williams Papers. Glass was at that time Secretary of the Treasury.

⁸⁹ Glass to Williams, December 28, 1918, *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Williams to Mrs. Robert E. Burries, January 12, 1918, *ibid.*

a boy.”⁹¹ One winter Senator and Mrs. Pittman went to Florida for a midseason vacation. While vacationing, Pittman spoke eulogistically to some of his friends about Williams. When one of them passed the compliment to Williams, he warned that too much attention must not be paid to Key Pittman’s praise of him because “he just likes me, that is about all.”⁹² Williams sent the letter to Pittman and told him to congratulate his wife upon having married “a man with such exquisite good taste in the selection of statesmen, philosophers, and saints.”⁹³

On one occasion while Williams was talking with Pittman upon an important matter he was interrupted abruptly by Postmaster General Burleson. Williams flushed with anger and acted rather rudely.⁹⁴ After an exchange of handwritten notes, the temporary ill feelings were forgotten and mutual friendship was restored. Both Burleson and Williams admitted that they had been in a state of high nervous tension, had acted hastily, and had been friends too long to permit an unconsidered act upon the part of one and hastily spoken words upon the part of the other to fracture their friendship. As Williams wrote, “we are both getting so old that we can’t make many new friends and it behooves us to keep our old ones.”⁹⁵

Although Williams on many occasions was forced to take periods of rest, he was constantly watching the health of the members of his family and of his friends. Frequently he urged a friend to get away from the work and drudgery for a few days of rest and recreation. “I am somewhat worried lately about your physical condition,” wrote Williams to Senator Ollie M. James a few months before the latter’s

⁹¹ *Id.* to John R. Dunlap, January 15, 1923, *ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Id.* to Key Pittman, January 15, 1923, *ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Id.* to William H. King, June 16, 1914, *ibid.* “If I ever lose my temper it is in private when I am taken by surprise.”

⁹⁵ Albert S. Burleson to Williams, November 21, 1919; Williams to Burleson, November 21, 1919; Burleson to Williams, December 3, 1919, *ibid.*

death in 1918. He urged the Kentuckian to arrange a "pair" with some Republican and leave Washington for a week or two. Williams did not feel that he should "beg pardons" for taking the liberty of writing because there are no liberties between good friends.⁹⁶ James refused to take the advice of his friend. Late in the summer of that year Williams returned from the funeral of his own daughter just in time to make a train to attend Senator James's funeral. He was almost worn out and would not have gone had it not been for the sake of his strong friendship for his deceased colleague.

In the summer of 1915, Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the Navy, was invited to get away from everything and to be "plum quiet" for a week at Cedar Grove. If the distinguished Secretary would only fail to register his name in Yazoo City, no one would know where he was. Cedar Grove offered a menu of peaches, plums, mutton, shoat, chicken, and books, with all the sleep desired.⁹⁷ The attractive invitation made Daniels eager to break away from his anchorage and join his friend. He was prevented from doing so because Franklin D. Roosevelt, his assistant, had just undergone an operation for appendicitis, which made it impossible for Daniels to leave Washington.⁹⁸

Not only did Williams, when he thought his friends were being overworked, urge them to take a vacation, but when he learned that they were ill, he wrote little messages of cheer and best wishes for a return to health. "I am very sorry indeed," began one of these letters, "to hear that you are sick and I hope you are getting very much better."⁹⁹

An unusual friendship sprang up between Williams and Vice-President Thomas R. Marshall. Wit and spicy stories were exchanged generously between these two associates.

⁹⁶ Williams to Ollie M. James, April 18, 1918, *ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Id.* to Josephus Daniels, June 29, 1915, *ibid.*

⁹⁸ Daniels to Williams, July 6, 1915, *ibid.*

⁹⁹ Williams to Claude Swanson, January 31, 1917, *ibid.*

Several attempts to get the noted Hoosier to Cedar Grove failed.¹⁰⁰ Although the Vice-President apparently was eager to see "a tiger in his lair," he could not make arrangements to come.¹⁰¹ When some of his friends attempted to inaugurate a presidential boom for Marshall in 1920, he wrote Williams that he was desirous of getting away from Washington as soon as possible and spending the rest of his life out among the "common peepul." His years in Washington had been pleasant, however; he had enjoyed many hours listening to the wisdom which fell from the lips of Williams. Marshall hoped that he and Williams would have happiness as each approached the eventide of life.¹⁰²

For many years, Williams and Jacob H. Gallinger served together in the House and in the Senate. Although on the opposite sides of the political fence, they were dear friends and often exchanged little gifts.¹⁰³ On the New Hampshire statesman's eighty-first birthday, Williams rendered a brief tribute in the Senate. He had never known his old friend to be even accidentally right upon any matter of partisan politics, but he had never known a sweeter person who was more really honest, faithful, and brave.¹⁰⁴ When a partially reformed southern rebel made such remarks about a "down-east" Yankee, it was obvious that friendship had erased all lines of sectionalism and party politics. "That was a dandy tribute you paid me," wrote Gallinger upon reaching his office after the session of the Senate that day.¹⁰⁵

Among the many other Republicans who could be included in this parade of friends, was Borah. Although preceding Williams in the Senate by four years, Borah was Williams' comrade during the latter's two terms in the upper chamber. Little thoughtful deeds of friendship such

¹⁰⁰ *Id.* to Thomas R. Marshall, April 2, 1915, *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Marshall to Williams, April 15, 1915, *ibid.*

¹⁰² *Id.* to *id.*, May 24, 1920, *ibid.*

¹⁰³ Jacob H. Gallinger to *id.*, April 22, 1916, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 2 Sess., 4189-90.

¹⁰⁵ Gallinger to Williams, March 28, 1918, in Williams Papers.

as sending bits of poetry, doggerel, or cartoons which portrayed the actions of each other became almost habitual between them. Such a relationship existed privately even when upon the floor of the Senate these two members were on opposite sides of such important questions as the League of Nations and the peace treaties after the World War. It was during the World War that Williams one day on the floor of the Senate said: "Every patriotic American loves . . . to listen to the voice of the Senator from Idaho whenever he talks in this Chamber. I wish that every Democrat and every Republican in this Chamber, including myself, were a mere duplication of the Senator from Idaho, who has kept his head level, himself in poise, his soul in loyalty, and his interests undisturbed by war passions."¹⁰⁶

These two men were endeared to each other by mutual intellectual integrity. On a later occasion, when Borah was opposing some of the measures of his party under Harding, Williams wrote that "politics makes intellectual cowards of some people and strains the intellectual courage of nearly all who participate in its struggles. . . . The older I grow the less respect I have for mere intellect and the more respect I have for intellectual integrity. You are fortunate in possessing both."¹⁰⁷ The recipient of this frank confession of friendship was touched from the bottom of his heart. "There is no man in public or private life from whom I should have preferred to have the message you sent me," he wrote.¹⁰⁸

As a rule, when Williams began to speak, he walked over to the Republican side of the aisle, turned and faced his political adversaries. Senator Watson once asked: "Williams, why in the hell do you always come over on this side to speak?" Williams replied: "I have got to be a missionary to you damn political heathens."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 2 Sess., 5567.

¹⁰⁷ Williams to William E. Borah, April 24, 1922, in Williams Papers.

¹⁰⁸ Borah to Williams, April 25, 1922, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Interview with former Senator James E. Watson, August 5, 1937.

The habit of speaking to the Republicans was sometimes violated, as when Williams and J. Thomas Heflin of Alabama had a heated argument. In the summer of 1922, while Heflin delivered an outdoor address in Washington, he had been disturbed by airplanes flying overhead. He returned to the Senate, introduced a resolution to prevent airplanes from disturbing public assemblies in the District of Columbia, and asked unanimous consent for its immediate consideration. Williams objected, and the debate was on. When Williams demurred, Heflin inquired if the gentleman understood the nature of the resolution. This oddly stated inquiry aroused the ire of the Senator from Mississippi, who rushed over to within a few feet of Heflin. A member of the Senate expected to see Williams strike Heflin,¹¹⁰ but Williams only jerked his hand up behind his ear to hear more distinctly what the Alabamian was saying. The substance of the argument was that Heflin was appealing, upon the grounds of patriotism, for the enactment of this resolution. Williams, more practical perhaps, objected because there was nothing free in the world but the air. He contended that trusts and monopolies owned the earth, the Republican tariff had control of the United States, French militaristic instinct controlled Europe; and he pleaded to leave the air free to God, His angels, and airplanes, even if it did interrupt the President of the United States and the Senator from Alabama on occasions of public speaking. "Why should anybody quarrel with anything which makes a noise in competition with a Senator making a noise? They are both equally noisy and, between the two, the airplane is the more scientific noise."¹¹¹

At one point in the argument Heflin exclaimed: "Well, whatever else may be said of me, when I come into the Senate chamber, I always come in full possession of my faculties."

¹¹⁰ Interview with Senator Carter Glass, August 10, 1937.

¹¹¹ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 2 Sess., 8578-80.

"Well, what difference does that make?" Williams snapped back.¹¹²

Most of this speech was stricken from the *Record* because of its unparliamentary content. Carter Glass characterized Williams' contribution to this debate as his most brilliant brief speech.¹¹³

Oddly enough, each of these gentlemen thought he had the better of his antagonist. Heflin told a friend of Williams that he was sorry he had bested the Mississippian in that heated encounter. Williams went home that night and said to his wife: "I sort of lost my sense of proportion today and ridiculed Tom Heflin and set all of the Senate and the galleries to laughing at him. I am sorry I did it."¹¹⁴

When the Volstead Act became effective, one of Williams' dearest friends was thrown out of employment. Even before Phillip J. Roche's barroom was legally closed, Williams had begun to investigate bureaus in Washington in the hope of securing employment for his friend.¹¹⁵ Roche finally secured employment as a doorkeeper of the Senate gallery. A few months later, when the Republicans came into control of the Senate, Williams' one request to Senators Curtis and Penrose was that Roche be retained.¹¹⁶ The request was granted, and Roche remained doorkeeper of the Senate until his death.¹¹⁷

At the beginning of prohibition, Roche told Williams: "I have enough whiskey saved to do you until you die; just tell me when you want it." Williams replied: "Bring me a quart every Monday and every Friday afternoons." For years Roche held an annual party for his Mississippi friend. The honored guest did the inviting for the occasion. The parties were held in the barroom until prohibition, and

¹¹² Watson, *As I Knew Them*, 288.

¹¹³ Interview with Senator Carter Glass, August 10, 1937.

¹¹⁴ Williams to Gerrard Harris, September 22, 1922, in Williams Papers.

¹¹⁵ J. M. Burlew to A. Bruce Bielaski, December 27, 1917, *ibid.* Burlew was secretary to Williams.

¹¹⁶ Williams to Charles Curtis, May 3, 1919, *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Interview with Senator Pat Harrison, June 1, 1937.

then were moved to Roche's home. At the last Williams party, the Mississippian gave a toast to his beloved host: "There is one friend whose memory will stay with me longer, whom I will cherish more dearly than all of the lords of fame with whom I have been associated. I admire him for his purity of mind, for his learning, and his love of everything that is honorable."¹¹⁸

Joseph P. Tumulty as private secretary to President Wilson was drawn into an intimate friendship with Williams. Soon after Wilson's Administration began, a whispering campaign which achieved national prominence was started by demagogues and anti-Catholic groups. Tumulty, a Catholic, was charged with being the intermediary through whom the Pope was dominating Wilson and running the American government. Williams received letters from constituents who were very much wrought up over the anticipation of an immediate control of the United States government by Catholics. One letter predicted repetitions of St. Bartholomew's Day and the Spanish Inquisition.¹¹⁹

The fearful constituent was warned not to let things of this sort mislead him from the real fight before the American people. Religion had "no more to do with it than a jay bird's plumage has to do with the attire of the angelic choir." There were plenty of people to watch out for freedom of religion. "Among them count me as one," added the Senator.¹²⁰

With a letter marked "For an idle hour," Williams sent these letters to the President. The impression which Williams received from letters of this nature may be seen from excerpts from his note to Wilson:

"I never knew before that Tumulty was such a dangerous character—that is as regards religion. I had never regarded

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Sterling N. Acree to Williams, January 28, 1914, in Williams Papers.

¹²⁰ Williams to Acree, January 31, 1914, *ibid.*

him as a religious factor at all. I knew that you had some serious intentions along the line but did not know that Tumulty was your Father confessor. . . . Even if you and Tumulty want to start an Inquisition, I hope you will make it either French, Dutch, or Italian, for the adjective 'Spanish' in connection with an inquisition, has a pretty bad sort of meaning. Moreover, I hope when the time comes for you to inaugurate it that you will send me a special papal dispensation for me and have Tumulty sign it." ¹²¹

Williams' delightful ridicule of the whole absurd business was enjoyed by the President, who, however, was afraid that Williams did not realize the seriousness of the matter nor how widely it was distributed throughout the country. "I know how small a minority take any stock in it," wrote Wilson, "but it is distressing that such absolutely absurd ideas should find lodgment in any minds in America." The President wished he could answer his letters as perfectly as Williams did those of his constituents. To do so would be intellectual and literary amusement.¹²² Tumulty was urged by Williams to desist from felonious designs upon all the Protestants of the country. He should go to the President and plead his permission. "Quit it if you can without his permission but if you can't quit it without it, then get his permission. I never knew of a man with as innocent a face as you have who was possessed with as fiendish and felonious designs. Say your prayers and procure forgiveness and quit it." ¹²³

Williams wrote Thomas E. Watson that his charges that Tumulty was a papal spy were worth no more than a belief that Williams was a spy of the Pasha of Persia. The President had too much sense to be persuaded by his secretary to show any religious favoritism, and Tumulty, in Williams'

¹²¹ *Id.* to Wilson, January 31, 1914, *ibid.*

¹²² Wilson to Williams, February 5, 1914, *ibid.*

¹²³ Williams to Joseph P. Tumulty, February 14, 1914, in possession of Mr. Tumulty, Washington, D.C.; copy also in Williams Papers.

opinion, had too much honor and honesty and felt too highly the sense of loyalty to his Chief to dream of dictating to the President.¹²⁴

To yet another constituent, Williams replied: "Let us take for granted, my dear friend, that our President, Mr. Wilson, has some sense, some character, and some independence. If you do not know it, we people in Washington do know that he is not only nominally but really President of the United States and that neither Mr. Tumulty nor I nor anyone else controls him. The truth is that nobody influences him very much. The further truth is that he is not subject to the amount of influence that he ought to be from the arguments and knowledge of those more experienced perhaps, than he, in public matters."¹²⁵ The situation had been created partly by the propaganda of fanatics, partly from ignorance of the actual situation, and still more from the proneness of mankind to be gulled. The best way to counteract such influence was to write a nice private letter to each person who expressed alarm because of misapprehensions.¹²⁶

The Senator, the President, and Tumulty spent many enjoyable hours together. One of the most pleasant of these occasions was that when Williams accompanied the President on his private train, in September, 1916, to Hodgenville, Kentucky, to dedicate the marble shrine at Lincoln's birthplace as a national memorial.¹²⁷ Williams presented the shrine, and the President accepted it. In writing to his son-in-law, Edwin R. Holmes,¹²⁸ about the memorable day,

¹²⁴ *Id.* to Thomas E. Watson, June 30, 1914, *ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Id.* to E. A. Butler, March 14, 1914, *ibid.* Most of this letter is quoted in Baker, *Woodrow Wilson*, III, 305.

¹²⁶ *Id.* to Joseph P. Tumulty, March 14, 1914, in possession of Mr. Tumulty.

¹²⁷ Mrs. Edith Bolling Wilson, *My Memoir* (Indianapolis, 1939), 105, has written of the pleasant trip, with Wilson and "the inimitable Senator John Sharp Williams . . . swapping stories."

¹²⁸ Williams to Edwin R. Holmes, November 9, 1916, in Williams Papers.

Williams added —“*entre nous*”—that Tumulty told him the President said Williams' speech was the speech of the occasion. Tumulty was Irish, and all Irish were possessed of much blarney, but Williams thought the President correctly reported.

Tumulty, writing in the *New York Times*,¹²⁹ related a delightful story, picturing Williams among several of his friends in Washington. This account indicated the sartorial attributes of Senator James H. Lewis and the familiar amiability of Senator Williams. Senator Key Pittman approached Senator Williams and remarked that Senator Lewis was wearing lavender socks, although he swore that he had not seen them. Williams was skeptical and went over to Lewis and said in his attractive drawl: “Jim Ham, put out your laig.” Lewis did so and disclosed a lavender sock.

The next day Williams said to Pittman: “Key, I'll bet the lunch check, you can't tell me the color of Lewis' socks today.” Pittman took the bet.

“Dark blue,” he said.

Williams walked over to Lewis and said: “Jim Ham, put out your laig.” Lewis again accommodately stuck out his leg, and the socks were dark blue. The procedure was repeated on several days in succession, Pittman always winning. Williams' curiosity was aroused. He requested that Pittman inform him of the secret of his uncanny knowledge about the color of Lewis' hosiery. Pittman finally consented and informed his Mississippi friend that he had learned that Lewis always wore socks the color of his necktie.

After telling Williams the secret, Pittman asked Lewis to change his habit on the next day and wear socks of a color different from that of his necktie. This Lewis consented to do. The next morning Williams approached Ashurst and said: “Henry, I bet you the lunch ticket for Pittman, you and myself that I can guess the color of Lewis' stockings.”

¹²⁹ *New York Times*, December 30, 1921.

Ashurst knew the true situation and promptly accepted the challenge. Lewis was wearing a green tie; so Williams said the socks were green.

"Very well," said Ashurst, "we will go over and see." They went over to Lewis and Williams said: "Jim Ham, put out your laig." The socks were red. Of course, Williams made good his bet.

Years before Wilson became President, it had been Williams' pleasure to know and admire him. Their friendship in some respects closely resembled that of Henry Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt. Wilson and Williams held law degrees from the University of Virginia. They had been members of the same literary society while attending that institution. Williams preceded Wilson at Jefferson's educational center, but Wilson was a classmate of Christopher Harris Williams, the younger brother of John Sharp. Both Williams and Wilson were deeply imbued with the political philosophy and teachings of Thomas Jefferson. Both were scholars in the truest sense of the word. Both were masters in the correct use of the English language. Their friendship, which lasted many years, was cooled only once and then over a matter of patronage. Their opinions differed several times on questions of national importance, such as immigration and woman suffrage, but as both were thinking men, these temporary divergent conclusions had no effect on their friendship.

Into Williams' office from numerous friends in Mississippi and elsewhere flowed a continuous stream of newspaper clippings, poems, and doggerel, many of which were sent to the White House. Often Williams added, in speaking of the lines of poetry which he was sending to the White House that "while they were not poetry they might be 'werse.'" He hoped that the President would take three or perhaps five minutes from his labors and amuse himself by reading the jingles.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ See several letters expressing this idea in Williams Papers.

On several occasions when Williams was sick, the President sent flowers to his friend's bedside.¹³¹ Once Wilson brought flowers in person to Williams' home on Sixteenth Street. It was no news for a Senator to carry flowers to the bedside of an ill President, but it was front-page news for a President to bring flowers to the bedside of an ill Senator. The President had heard that Williams was sick and knew that the Senator wanted to have a conference with him. Wilson found, upon arriving at Williams' home, that his friend was well enough to go to his office. They remained in the Senator's home long enough to place the flowers in a vase of water, and then the President drove Williams to the Senate Office Building. To newspaper reporters Williams stated, "It was just the act of a very good fellow who had heard that I was sick and didn't know I was able to get out again. So he came to see me, in his big-hearted way, that I might not have to venture out in the weather. It was very fine of the President, I am sure."¹³²

Wilson enjoyed a wholesome admiration for Williams because the Senator was one of the very few men in public life who had the courage to tell him when he was wrong. Williams would go to the White House in a frank and friendly manner and express his opinions freely, regardless of what ideas the President might have expressed.¹³³ It was no easy matter to tell the President of a mistake he had made or was about to make, but Williams did just that several times in such a way that Wilson held him in high esteem for his frankness.

Many people were firmly convinced that President Wilson was a very cold-blooded and hard-hearted man, but Williams knew otherwise. Those who thought that Wilson did not possess the human trait of warm-heartedness did not know him. There was "very much of the human in him. A

¹³¹ See Williams to Wilson, March 23, 1915, and other letters in *ibid.*

¹³² New York Times, December 21, 1916.

¹³³ Jackson Daily News, December 22, 1916.

genial sense of humor and a very warm heart.”¹³⁴ It was all mixed up with a good Scotch tenacity of purpose, which, when he served as President, became him very well. A few weeks after the disastrous defeat of the party in 1920, when Wilson was in the depths of pessimism and ill health, Williams wrote from Cedar Grove that he could sign himself, “now more completely than ever before, your friend.”¹³⁵

In the almost three years intervening between Wilson's retirement and his death, the friendship between these two men retained all of its intimacy and admiration. When Williams read something in the press from Mississippi which he thought would be of interest to the former President, he forwarded it to him. He requested on one occasion that Wilson not reply to a letter in which he enclosed some excerpts. Wilson's taking the trouble to reply would discourage him from doing little things that he would want to do in the future.¹³⁶ Before leaving Washington for the last time, Williams, in true southern style, dropped in to see Wilson for a visit.¹³⁷ They spent a long evening together talking for the last time of the many experiences they had shared during the long years of their friendship.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Williams to W. J. Fraser, October 21, 1918, in Williams Papers.

¹³⁵ *Id.* to Wilson, December 1, 1920, *ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Id.* to *id.*, January 6, 1922, *ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Id.* to *id.*, January 13, 1923, *ibid.*

¹³⁸ For a fuller treatment of the Wilson-Williams friendship, see George C. Osborn, “The Friendship of John Sharp Williams and Woodrow Wilson,” in *Journal of Mississippi History* (Jackson), I (1939), 3-13.

Chapter XIX

RETIREMENT

IN the summer of 1915, when Williams was very much disgruntled over the fact that his recommendation had been passed over in filling a vacant Federal office in Mississippi, he wrote to Wilson that he thought he would extricate himself "from an awkward position by retiring from public life and giving notice" at once of his "intention to do so at the end" of his term.¹ The President was genuinely distressed by the Senator's rash statement, and regretted that a small matter of patronage could cause such an outburst. He wrote immediately that Williams' retirement from public life would "be nothing short of a public misfortune," and begged reconsideration.² Gradually the irritation passed, and the next year, Williams was nominated unanimously, and was elected without opposition to succeed himself.

The show of confidence and loyalty by his constituents in Mississippi did not deter the Senator from any talk of retiring in the future. On December 18, 1916, he announced on the floor of the Senate that he would under no conditions be a candidate for re-election at the end of the term for which he had just been elected: "I never expect to be again a candidate for the Senate in Mississippi. I may live to the point where I will have good enough sense not to want any office. I do not know that my past career shows that I am capable of that degree of intellectual

¹ Williams to Wilson, August 2, 1915, in Williams Papers.

² Wilson to Williams, August 6, 1915, *ibid.*

growth, but perhaps I may be.”³ The people of the country were surprised and disappointed, especially his constituents in Mississippi, who had just given such an overwhelming proof of their love and loyalty to him. They did not feel like retiring him, and their wishes were “entitled to consideration.”⁴ They could take some comfort, however, in the fact that he had six full years to serve before his announcement would take effect. Perhaps within that time, he might be persuaded to alter his decision.⁵

Letters poured in from friends in various parts of the country full of praise for the Senator’s career in public life and of the hope that he would retract his statement about retiring at the end of his term. The letters served merely to increase his determination and to call forth his reasons for what seemed a rash statement. He expressed over and over again the idea that the political game “is not worth the candle.”⁶ Sometimes he endeavored to explain what he meant. “I am not at all tired of studying and trying to solve political questions,” he wrote. “I am tired of the drudgery of political life and still more tired of its insincerities.”⁷ He felt that he was carrying on a wise precedent set by former Senators from his state, George, Walthall, and Money, all of whom had retired voluntarily to allow Mississippi to send younger men to the Senate.⁸ He had no thought of betraying the interests of his beloved state and openly declared: “Of course, if I thought Mississippi would suffer by my retirement I wouldn’t retire, but I have no idea that she will.”⁹

Some of the reasons given were more personal. He seemed to have a growing horror of “lagging superfluous upon the

³ *Cong. Record*, 64 Cong., 2 Sess., 489.

⁴ *Jackson Daily News*, December 27, 1916.

⁵ *Ibid.*, December 22, 1916.

⁶ See Williams to Mrs. Daisy McLaurin Stevens, February 14, 1917, and other letters in the Williams Papers.

⁷ *Id.* to B. F. Quarles, Sr., May 1, 1917, *ibid.*

⁸ *Id.* to Alexander H. Rice, February 15, 1917, *ibid.*

⁹ *Id.* to H. C. Watson, July 30, 1917, *ibid.*

stage.”¹⁰ He spoke often of the fact that he would be an old man by 1923. As early as 1917, he wrote: “I am only 62 years old, and at 68 I will really be an old man. You must remember that I worked like a negro while I worked and I have played like the devil when I have played.”¹¹ His most serious physical handicap was his steadily increasing deafness. The measure of that limitation can be realized only in the light of the fact that Williams always did his best work as an impromptu debater. Most of all, he wanted to spend the last years—he knew they would be few—doing the things that he wanted to do. Mississippi had asked a great deal of him, perhaps more than she realized. With a touch of pathos, the aging Senator wrote: “The people seem to think that when they give you an office they have indulged in all the favoritism there is in the case. They hardly realize that when a man has surrendered his life to their service, he has surrendered something of value to him whether it is to them or not.”¹²

Events of the years that followed did not tend to change his feeling of discouragement. The stirring days of the war imposed heavy burdens on official Washington. The Democrats had legislative responsibility without workable majorities. Especially was this true when Democrats in opposition to the Administration were added to the political enemy. Williams’ health broke temporarily a number of times during these strenuous years. In November, 1917, he wrote: “The work in Washington the last session would not have been so awfully hard if it had not been for the nerve wearing character of it. There were so many questions which were new and so many of them were spontaneous besides being new, and there were so many Senators and Congressmen who did not rise to the occasion, who seemed to want to carry parish politics into international affairs.”¹³

¹⁰ *Id.* to James F. McCool, February 14, 1917, *ibid.*

¹¹ *Id.* to D. C. Colcock, January 12, 1917, *ibid.*

¹² *Id.* to R. E. Murphy, March 17, 1917, *ibid.*

¹³ *Id.* to Mrs. Mary Craig Kimbrough Sinclair, November 9, 1917, *ibid.*

Then followed the peace conference and the treaty fight. No man in the Senate identified himself more completely with the Wilsonian program than did John Sharp Williams. The President wrote from Paris that he felt his thought and hand greatly strengthened by the fine support that the Senator gave.¹⁴ Tumulty wrote a few months later that "in every crisis through which the Administration passed, his every act and thought have been shot through with a sincere and generous desire to serve the Administration and the country in the most effective way. . . . Throughout his incumbency, President Wilson has had no more loyal or devoted supporter."¹⁵ The Senator felt with President Wilson that the incorporation of the League in the treaty was of supreme importance. All through the long and bitter fight, the President and the League had no abler champion in the Senate than Williams. Perhaps no one except Wilson himself was more grievously disappointed and disgusted over what happened. In November, 1919, he wrote that the manner of surrender of the majority of the Senate to the enemies of any sort of league was disgraceful.¹⁶ The Senator's disillusionment over the quality of statesmanship represented in the Senate was complete. Events of 1920 served to seal his purpose of retiring. The final rejection of the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles in March, and the overwhelming defeat of the Democratic party in November proved that the people of the United States as well as the Senate had turned their backs on what, in Williams' mind, was the hope of the world.

The years that made him tired physically and brought him disillusionment in regard to public service also brought a deep personal sorrow from which he never recovered. Anyone who reads his correspondence will be struck with the great sadness which crushed him at the death of his

¹⁴ Wilson to Williams, January 13, 1919, *ibid.*

¹⁵ Tumulty to P. S. Field, October 16, 1919, copy of letter in possession of Mr. Tumulty.

¹⁶ Williams to Tumulty, November 22, 1919, in Williams Papers.

daughter Julia in 1918. Of course he gradually regained his hold on life, but he never recaptured his former buoyancy of spirit.

Those who knew him were not surprised, therefore, when he announced to a joint session of the Mississippi legislature on March 26, 1920, that he would "rather be a dog and bay at the moon than to spend one minute in the Senate after the expiration of my term of office."¹⁷ The legislature had invited the Senator to speak when the news spread through Jackson that Mr. and Mrs. Williams were in the city en route to Cedar Grove. Both of them were tired and ill after the long winter in Washington. Both had suffered attacks of influenza, from which they had not wholly recovered. However, when the invitation was extended to the Senator, he did not refuse. At noon he entered the Capitol accompanied by Mrs. Williams, who was paying her first visit to the building.

The address was brief but strongly partisan. The peace treaty had just been rejected by the Senate. He emptied the vials of his hatred on the tactics of the International Peace "Poison Squad." The treaty debate was the "most incoherent gabfest in human history"; its rejection was the result of the "great conspiracy commenced when the President went to Versailles." He branded the enemies of the League as "two by four politicians." In this speech, the Senator touched on a line of thought—the struggle between idealists and materialists—which he was to develop more fully later on the floor of the Senate. "Men sometimes disparage idealists, but they are coarse grained jackasses who do so and do it because they are coarse grained. But the idealists point the way and cheer men's souls."¹⁸ Williams closed his last speech to the legislature of his beloved state with the expression of the hope that he had served Mississippi faithfully and well. He was going home to rest and forget

¹⁷ Jackson *Daily News*, March 26, 1920.

¹⁸ New York *Times*, March 27, 1920.

that "there was ever such a body as the United States Senate."¹⁹

Comment on the Senator's proposed retirement was not confined to the Mississippi press. The Minneapolis *Journal* spoke of him as the last of the planter-statesmen whose "peers are in the past; they were orators, scholars, logicians, dialecticians, gentlemen of the old school, personalities picturesque, even when intolerable, like John Randolph of Roanoke. The planter statesman usually had temperament too." The *Journal* went on to express the hope that the Senator's announcement about retiring was a display of such temperament and would be reconsidered.²⁰ The *Christian Science Monitor* ranked Williams with the great statesmen of the past, and wondered "how much of prejudice and partisanship, and even of sectionalism, must be forgotten before that place shall be generally accorded to him."²¹ Although the country at large deplored the passing from the Senate of such a picturesque figure, his intimate friends saw how weary he had become, and approved his unalterable decision to retire to private life at the end of his term.²²

Once the decision was firmly made, Williams seemed to gain some degree of peace, even in the midst of the distressing election of 1920. When his friends called at Cedar Grove to offer consolation for the election news, the Senator, as usual seated out in the yard reading, assumed a philosophical attitude. He pointed to the cedars and myrtles where his mockingbirds were singing, and asked if his guests heard the birds. They were happy. They did not know there had been an election; neither did the grass, the corn, the sheep, nor the quietly grazing cattle. He seemed to find great comfort in the fact that he would soon be able to rest among his trees and his flowers, and live close to nature.

¹⁹ Jackson *Daily News*, March 26, 1920.

²⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, January 16, 1920.

²¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, January 7, 1920.

²² *Ibid.*, editorial, March 27, 1920. Fred Sullens was editor.

When a young man applied for the place as secretary to the Senator after retirement, Williams replied with characteristic quaintness and humor: "After I retire to private life, I would have no more need of a secretary than a nigger with a watermelon would have for a corkscrew."²³ He may not have needed a secretary, but the retired Senator continued a voluminous correspondence until a short while before his death. Hours of almost every day were spent in writing to friends.²⁴

The Senator was not by any means allowed to rest quietly in his decision. In 1921, the faction of the party in Mississippi of which he was the recognized leader sponsored a movement to persuade him to enter the race again. A letter from a leading editor urged reconsideration of the earlier decision.²⁵ The Senator was determined: "There is absolutely no use, even in my best friends talking to me about continuing in public life, although they can make me do almost anything in the world they want me to do except that."²⁶ During the summer months, letters poured in from all over the state appealing to him to remain in the Senate, on the grounds that, during the grave period of readjustment following the war, it was his duty to do so.²⁷ The press of Mississippi was practically unanimous in its attempted persuasion. His wing of the party had not yet turned its attention to another man to carry its banner in the senatorial campaign the next year.

There was no retreat from the earlier made decision. Had it not been for the need of the money, he probably would have resigned before his term was over. To a tested friend, Williams revealed his feelings and the causes: "You don't

²³ Williams to Joseph W. Ellis, October 14, 1921, in Williams Papers.

²⁴ See Williams Papers at Washington and Cedar Grove Plantation. Also Harrison Papers, and files of Tumulty, Washington; Major Fred Sullens, Jackson, Mississippi; Mr. Clay Sharkey, Glen Allan, Mississippi; and Miss Lucile Banks, Memphis, Tennessee.

²⁵ Sullens to Williams, April 22, 1921, in Williams Papers.

²⁶ Williams to Sullens, April 25, 1921, *ibid.*

²⁷ See *ibid.* for numerous letters.

know how the time drags on me at Washington now. . . . I have become thoroughly disappointed because there have been no world results from the war except . . . the defeat of the Kaiser. I had hoped for some great international agreement, which would stabilize the peace of the world, even if it did not totally prevent war. . . . It looks to me as if my boys had fought for very little, and as if a great many other boys had died for very little.”²⁸

That a man of Williams’ caliber and political influence could not turn his back on public life without some emotional conflicts, is vividly reflected in a letter written during 1922, as he watched the new Republican regime in Washington and the struggle over the election of his successor in Mississippi. A statement showing this feeling of struggle is to be found in these words: “I hate to go out of public life in a certain way just simply as I hate to be in private life where I can’t fight my enemies. . . . I won’t have many more years to live—probably three—possibly eight—and during these years I want to be left free and untrammelled to think and feel.”²⁹

Many in Mississippi were having a difficult time trying to understand how any person would voluntarily give up a place in the United States Senate to return to private life. Some predicted that “within a short time he will get tired of the farm: that the old war horse . . . will miss the joy of fighting, and yearn for a return to Capitol Hill.” These opinions were expressed by those who were not well enough acquainted with the man. He was never a mere politician. He was a student, a scholar with a love for books “the chief passion of his life.”³⁰

He could not help being intensely interested in the political situation in Mississippi. Not only was there a con-

²⁸ Williams to Thomas Nelson Page, January 18, 1921, *ibid.* Page, American Ambassador to Rome, was touring Europe. Williams’ letter was to Beaulieu, France.

²⁹ *Id.* to Otho C. Stubblefield, June 20, 1922, *ibid.*

³⁰ Jackson *Daily News*, October 18, 1922.

test in 1922 for his seat in the Senate, but also James K. Vardaman, whom Williams had defeated for the Senate by the small margin of 648 votes fifteen years earlier, and with whom he sat in the Senate during one term, was again in the running. Many of Williams' friends tried to use Vardaman's candidacy as a bait to draw him into the race. As early as February, 1921, he wrote to a constituent: "The only danger of Vardaman's being elected is the sort of feeling that you and other people have that I am the only man that can beat him. Get rid of that feeling. Unite upon some good, strong man."³¹ By November, 1921, Williams had decided that Congressman Hubert D. Stephens was that man.³² Early in 1922 he wrote: "I think Stephens can beat Vardaman, but whether he can or not, I am tired of the whole business, and if it be true that there is nobody in Mississippi except me who can beat Vardaman, then Vardaman won't be beaten."³³

Throughout the campaign he wrote to friends in Mississippi expressing his opinion of the men and their methods. Finally on September 6, 1922, one of his constituents wrote: "The news that Hubert D. Stephens shall be able to occupy the seat which you have made famous is gratifying to you we feel sure and makes us happy."³⁴ Williams replied: "Like you I was immensely pleased with the result of the primary."³⁵ He had already turned one laboring oar over to Harrison. Now he was quite ready to turn the other over to Stephens.

If Williams could not be disinterested in Mississippi politics, no more could he be untouched by what was going on in Washington. In thinking about the reorganization of the Senate after March 4, 1923, when he would be no longer a member, he could not resist using his influence to have

³¹ Williams to H. W. Phillips, February 10, 1921, in Williams Papers.

³² *Id.* to N. G. Augustus, November 5, 1921, *ibid.*

³³ *Id.* to Walter B. Stokes, January 9, 1922, *ibid.*

³⁴ W. N. McLemore to Williams, September 6, 1922, *ibid.*

³⁵ Williams to McLemore, September 9, 1922, *ibid.*

things go as he wanted them. Senator Underwood was to resign as Democratic leader in the Senate. By December, 1922, the race for the succession to the place had narrowed to Joe Robinson of Arkansas and Furnifold M. Simmons of North Carolina. Williams wrote to his newly elected successor asking that he support Robinson because he had confidence in his "integrity and purposes."³⁶

The next day he wrote an even stronger letter to Woodbridge N. Ferris of Michigan. In it he expressed his personal affection for Robinson and his admiration for him because he had stood by Wilson during the trying days of the war. He even defended Robinson on the charge often made that Robinson sometimes lost his temper. Williams admitted that it was true. Often people did that when they put their hearts and souls into a matter. He declared that Robinson never went beyond the bounds of courtesy and parliamentary procedure.³⁷

Senator Robinson wrote Williams a letter of appreciation when he learned about the letters in his behalf: "Your statements . . . respecting my abilities and services may affect my hat measure for a time. Seriously, your retirement from the Senate is generally regarded as a loss to the country and the party. You have served them both with exceptional ability and courage. Sometime before the first of March I want to arrange for a little meeting in a quiet place for a few of our best friends."³⁸

The last session that Williams served in the Senate was very difficult for him. Mrs. Williams did not accompany him to Washington, so that he had a good reason for refusing to attend the many social events to which he was invited.³⁹ Letters from Mrs. Williams at Cedar Grove served

³⁶ *Id.* to Hubert D. Stephens, December 12, 1922, *ibid.*

³⁷ *Id.* to Woodbridge N. Ferris, December 13, 1922, *ibid.*

³⁸ Joseph T. Robinson to Williams, December 14, 1922, *ibid.*

³⁹ See Williams to Mrs. Joseph H. Frelinghuysen, February 2, 1923, and other letters in *ibid.*

to increase his loneliness and impatience to be free. "That precious lamb of a wife of mine writes me a letter about every other day, tells me that she is lonesome and almost expresses the hope that I am," he observed early in January, 1923.⁴⁰

In regard to his irritation during that last session, the Senator wrote to a friend in February that he was having a time surviving it. "I can't stay in the Senate here two hours to save my life, I get so intensely bored, and you know it was twenty years ago that I said I would never permit anyone to bore me again. . . . I don't remember ever to have bored myself, and when I get away from Washington I don't intend to allow anyone else to bore me. I can't help it here especially; asses have a right to talk in the Senate, and now and then it becomes a duty of mine to listen to them."⁴¹

Williams' last bill in the Senate provided for the erection in the city of Washington a monument in memory of the faithful colored "mammies" of the South. Referred to the Committee on Library, of which he was chairman, it was duly reported and unanimously passed. It was a tribute by the Senate to the retiring Mississippian as well as to all of the faithful colored "mammies" of the Old South.⁴² It might have been erected "to the faithful negroes of the South, then it would have been to the memory of the 'Uncle Toms' and 'Mammies' both," he stated later.⁴³

As "an almost parting word" to the Senators, Williams on December 27, in speaking on the Naval Appropriation bill stated again his philosophy of America's part in international affairs. "It will not be long before I leave you, and God knows I never intend to bother you after I leave you or to be bothered by you. . . . America is part of this

⁴⁰ *Id.* to Mrs. Mabel Money Kitchin, January 5, 1923, *ibid.*

⁴¹ *Id.* to Mrs. Lilley T. Caldwell, February 1, 1923, *ibid.*

⁴² *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 4 Sess., 209, 2681, 5694. This bill was not reported from the Library Committee of the House.

⁴³ Williams to L. Stoddard Taylor, January 10, 1923, in Williams Papers.

earth; her traditions, her ideals, her magnificent unselfishness are a part of the present status of this earth." ⁴⁴

When Harry B. Hunt interviewed the Senator on January 20, 1923, to get his opinion on what he considered the biggest milestone in his Congressional career, Hunt found him convinced that the greatest milestone had not been reached. "I haven't reached it yet," he said. "I'll reach it on March 4, for the biggest milestone in my life will be my leaving the United States Senate. And you bet I'll be glad to go." He went on to tell one of his priceless stories about the Senate, comparing it to a mule on his plantation. One of the Negroes came to Williams one day and said: "Boss, dat am sho'ly a powerful fine mule, but he suttinly do make the mostest sideways motions and travels fu'ther 'thout gittin' no place en any mule I ever seed." ⁴⁵

Several other events of 1923 made evident the finality of the severing of the ties that the political situation held for him. Practically all matters of patronage were turned over to Pat Harrison because, as Williams wrote: "You are staying in and I am going out. I am going to leave all or very nearly all these matters to your judgment so that you can avail yourself of things in such a way as to help your future." ⁴⁶ Not only did Harrison receive the patronage matters which might at times be troublesome, but he fell heir to Williams' office in the Senate Office Building, Room 217, and to the retiring statesman's seat and desk in the Senate chamber. There was a good deal of sentiment attached to the desk because it was the one Jefferson Davis had occupied. ⁴⁷

Leaving Washington after twelve years in the Senate was not a simple matter. The official correspondence of that period had to be gone through and made ready for shipment. When the task was done, there were nine mail

⁴⁴ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 4 Sess., 928.

⁴⁵ *Jackson Daily News*, January 21, 1923.

⁴⁶ Williams to Pat Harrison, January 4, 1923, in Harrison Papers.

⁴⁷ *Boston Herald*, January 18, 1923.

pouches full. Lest the mail carrier at Yazoo City be inconvenienced, one sack was sent each day until all the wealth of material on the official life of the Senator had gone.⁴⁸ It was to return almost fifteen years later as a valuable collection in the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress.

During the closing years of Williams' public career, he received many requests to write reminiscences, memoirs, and his formula for success. To express the last, he did not use the number of words required in one request.⁴⁹ His answer was: "first, intense interest in what you are trying to do, so intense as to shut out . . . everything else, secondly, dogged persistence in every way not foreign to the path of honor."⁵⁰ Publishers in vain urged him to an autobiographical account of his "wonderfully interesting and significant public career."⁵¹ His life and public career, he wrote, had been "an account of misdirected effort. Even the peace of the world which I have loved is downed and for nothing else . . . have I worked and prayed."⁵² To another request, he admitted that he thought he could make it interesting to the reader and amusing to himself. If he did so, he would not have the Shakespearian troupe of friends needed for an honored old age. "Most autobiographical things are either pleasant lies, at least in what they fail to tell, or else unpleasantly truthful."⁵³

From France, Thomas Nelson Page urged the Senator to "turn in and write your reminiscences." It would be a permanent contribution to the history of our country. "I hate to let the Adamses and Lodges do all the intimate story

⁴⁸ Williams to George L. Donald, January 23, 1923, in Williams Papers. There were fourteen mail pouches when all of the Williams files finally arrived at Cedar Grove.

⁴⁹ Vir Publishing Company to Williams, March 6, 1919, *ibid.* He was asked to state his formula in 250 words.

⁵⁰ Williams to Vir Publishing Company, March 18, 1919, *ibid.*

⁵¹ Lyman Beecher Stowe to Williams, September 15, 1920, *ibid.*

⁵² Williams to Stowe, September 18, 1920, *ibid.*

⁵³ *Id.* to Ellery Sedgwick, November 30, 1920, *ibid.*

telling of our people. Get to work.”⁵⁴ Williams confessed in reply that he had absolutely no memory for the details of his own experiences. “The Adamses and Lodges possess this advantage over me; where the one could not and the other cannot recollect, they invent. I would be unwilling to do that.”⁵⁵

Williams was offered several attractive positions when he left Washington. On January 23, he wrote to Mrs. Williams that there seemed to be a sort of conspiracy afoot to put him to work as soon as he retired from public life. One of the big newspapers had sent a man to him the day before to offer him three or four times a Senator’s salary for an editorial a day, or for three or four articles a week. “I told him,” wrote the Senator, “that just at present I was so cynical and had such a gigantic disgust with everything that I wished him to wait for two or three months and maybe I would be, as so many of my friends think, bored. I told him I was afraid I would not, however. . . . I shall, of course, after I go out, miss the salary. I won’t be able to do little nice things for worthy people, who need help, as I have done for so many years. With that exception, I don’t expect to realize any real sacrifice on leaving public life.”⁵⁶ Williams never accepted this offer. More than anything else he wanted freedom from cares and responsibilities.

Of all the letters that he received during those last months, none was more touching than one from his old friend Professor W. H. Echols of the University of Virginia: “It is with distress that the alumni of this University and the people all over the land learn that you are going to retire from active work, at this time, the time of all times when we so need brains and leaders of men, and at a time when there never was so great a dearth of MEN in whom the people believe and put their faith and trust.

⁵⁴ Thomas Nelson Page to Williams, January 5, 1921, *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Williams to Page, January 18, 1921, *ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Id.* to Mrs. Betty D. Williams, January 23, 1923, in Williams Papers, Cedar Grove Plantation.

"John, you are the last great figure the South created out of its travail, and with you passes away the great generation 'our war' left us with to reconstruct our people and to save our honor. Your influence has been far greater than you know. Your courage, your clear seeing brain, your great Soul, and your honor above all have been a great sustaining light—and an example to our people throughout this generation. It has been a great blessed privilege to me to know you through our long lives, and the knowing you has helped me to be what I am in courage and steadfastness to what is true and manly in my life.

"Old friends do not talk bunkum to each other, they understand without words. But you and I are now winding in our reels and I must say these things because my heart is full of them." ⁵⁷

The Senator's reply was tinged with characteristic humor and philosophy: "I not only appreciate what you say about me, I simply love it. For a long time, Reddy, I was afraid that the American Republic might not be able to totter along and might sink down like an old imbecile who is held up when I retired, but when I reflect that George Washington and Thomas Jefferson have passed on and the blamed old thing kept on going, I gather a fresh hold on my natural optimism and hope for the best. I know that I do not deserve all of your praise but I hope that I have deserved as much of it at any rate as comes from the possession of intellectual and a certain degree of moral courage which makes a fellow stand by his guns." ⁵⁸

His friends began inviting Williams to farewell parties and inquiring about his farewell speech in the Senate. He answered that "a farewell address from me would be a manifestation of megalomania," and that he certainly did not intend to deliver one.⁵⁹ When the Mississippi Society

⁵⁷ W. H. Echols to Williams, January 2, 1923, in Williams Papers.

⁵⁸ Williams to Echols, January 17, 1923, *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Jackson *Daily News*, February 27, 1923.

at Washington invited Williams to make a farewell address to them, he declined and confessed that he was planning to write a farewell letter to the "People of Mississippi."⁶⁰ Notwithstanding the discouraging answer, when the night for the Mississippi Society dinner arrived, the Senator was there with Senator Pat Harrison, Representative Ben Humphreys, and many other natives of his beloved state. They all paid him tribute and gave him as a parting gift a silver knife with a corkscrew attachment. The gift led the Senator to remark that being an Episcopalian of the High Church, he would follow the injunction of the late Bishop Thompson and carry his prayer book and corkscrew.

The Senator spoke feelingly of his love for the people of Mississippi, and renewed his promise of a farewell letter to them. He regaled his audience with his humorous stories, and then concluded with a description of the life he would lead when he went into seclusion. "There's a rooster Will keeps in the myrtle tree back of the house. He is better than any alarm clock and much more certain. Each morning he will call me from sleep.

"I shall arise early, have my bath and shave and cut my own flowers while the dew is on them. A little breakfast, and then to my library and read books.

"If I am fortunate as my grandfather was and happen to have those things that go to compose a mint julep, I shall make one. Then to dinner—the kind that costs you \$2.50 up here. After that, a little nap, then back to my books and letter writing.

"After that is done it will be about supper time—not dinner mind you. Just about dusk I shall have a concert by my own band—owned by me if by anybody else but God Almighty. They are the mockingbirds that nest in my trees. When the time comes to go, after this happy old age, I will be carried by my neighbors out of my own house and

⁶⁰ Williams to Mrs. Percy E. Quinn, February 15, 1923, in Williams Papers.

planted in my own graveyard at the feet of my father and mother and grandfather and grandmother.

"This is unpoetical, but it's a lot more honest than being a Senator. You don't have to play make-believe."⁶¹

The manner of the exit of Williams from Washington was typical of the "whimsicality and modesty of the man."⁶² He had heard that some of his colleagues were going to make farewell speeches to him in the Senate. The people of Mississippi were planning "the greatest ovation [in Jackson] . . . ever extended to any man in the history of this state. . . . The grand old man deserves it. He has given all of the best years of his life to the people of Mississippi. He has been their servant, faithful and unselfish at all times, and reflecting great honor and credit on the name of this state. . . . Not one single act in his long and eventful career has ever brought a blush of shame to the faces of his people."⁶³ The only way to avoid these unwanted displays was to leave Washington before the close of the session and arrive at Cedar Grove before the time of his supposed arrival.

In accordance with that decision, he called on President Harding on March 1 to say goodbye. When he encountered the newspapermen later, he said, "I won't say goodbye to you. I may see you again someday . . . *Auf Wiedersehen*."⁶⁴

During his last weeks in Washington the Senator received dozens of invitations to social functions of every description. He went to only three of them. But the night before his departure, he did meet a few friends under the genial roof of Phillip Roche, Senate doorkeeper, former saloonkeeper, and friend of many years' standing. Senators Pat Harrison and Augustus O. Stanley, former Senator

⁶¹ Yazoo City (Miss.) *Yazoo County News*, March 12, 1923.

⁶² *Baltimore Sun*, March 4, 1923.

⁶³ *Jackson Daily News*, December 17, 1922.

⁶⁴ *Washington Evening Star*, March 1, 1923.

Mark Smith, and Joseph P. Tumulty were among the group. In the modest home, hospitality was warm and friendly. Roche waited on the table part of the time and then sat down with the guests. Thus the last hours of the great statesman in Washington were passed—not at a splendid farewell given by the social and political leaders in Washington, but in the humble home of a Senate doorkeeper. It was natural that the hours passed quickly with much storytelling and reminiscing from the lips of the honor guest.⁶⁵

The next day when the train pulled away from the Union Station, Phillip Roche was standing there. Tears streamed down the man's rugged face as he told his Senator friend goodbye and watched the train departing southward. More than one heart in Washington ached with an acute sense of personal loss.⁶⁶ During the closing hours of the Senate session, Harrison arose from the desk which Williams had occupied for twelve years and spoke a few appropriate words for his friend. "Possessing a towering intellect, a store of ready information that is inexhaustible, a sharpness, a quickness, and a richness in debate that is as attractive as it is effective, it was natural that during his 30 years of congressional life he should have risen to the leadership of his party in the House and a commanding position in this body. . . . A picturesque and unique character, he will be greatly missed from this Chamber and the public life of the Nation."⁶⁷

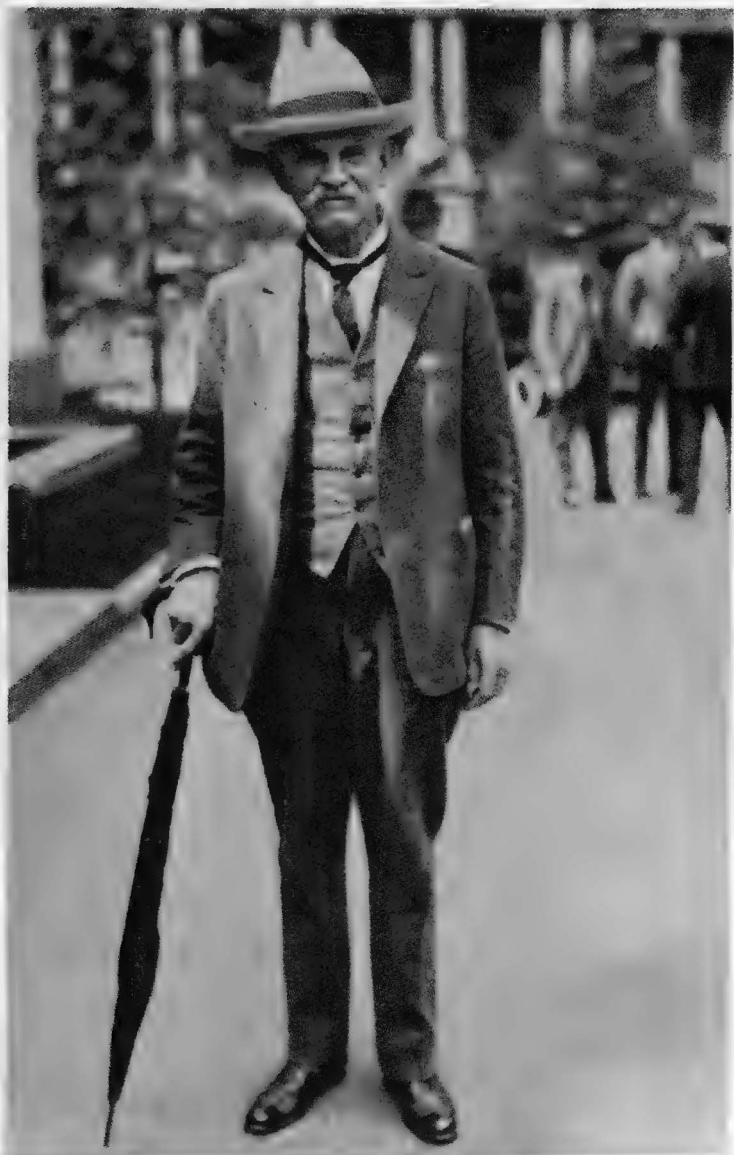
On March 3 the Jackson *Daily News* carried the long promised farewell to the people of Mississippi.

"My dear friends: I thus address you because next to God and my own immediate family you have been my best and dearest friends. It is now thirty years since I first took an oath of office as one of your Representatives in the Congress of the United States. During that time—nearly half of the Scripturally designated life of man, I have served, or sought

⁶⁵ *Cong. Record*, 67 Cong., 4 Sess., 5606-5607.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 5606.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 5596.



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**WILLIAMS WITH PANAMA HAT AND
UMBRELLA**

to serve you. That service has been at least honest, faithful, and vigilant. The ability of it was, of course, limited by the measure of my own ability; but the good intent and sincerity of it has been measured only by a higher thing—my love for you and for Mississippi. . . .

“But now that I am retiring and no one can suspect me of any motive of self-advancement, I delight in the opportunity to tell you my willing devotion to the advancement of your honor and your best and highest interests. . . .

“Whenever I have fallen below the standard that I fain would have set for my endeavor, it has been my fault not yours. You have done your part. You have given me encouragement, trust, fidelity, affection. You have ‘held up my hands’ for me, and if I have at times let them drop, the fault is my own. General Lee said at Appomattox ‘Men; I have done the best I could for you.’ I cannot say that, but I can say that there never was a time when I have not loved to aim at the best for you that I could see. At least it was never the heart that fell short of the full measure of service.

“Many asked me to make a ‘Farewell Address’ in the Senate. That requires an egotism approaching megalomania, from my standpoint. Really great men, like Washington . . . or . . . Jefferson Davis . . . were justified in that sort of thing; but not lesser men, nor men whose role has been acted on a lesser stage.”⁶⁸

There was considerable comment editorially on the retirement. The *New York Times* stated on March 6: “His wit, his satire, his ample scholarship are as well known as the Capitol. In the Senate, more and more, he has taken a perfectly independent position. . . . He was frank and fearless. But he got sick of the show. He has gone back to his books and his plantation.”⁶⁹ Harold de Wolfe Fuller of the *Independent* observed: “Through the retirement of John Sharp Williams the Senate suffers a loss it can ill

⁶⁸ Jackson *Daily News*, March 4, 1923.

⁶⁹ New York *Times*, March 6, 1923.

afford. For the veteran Mississippi Senator stood, not only by reason of his scholarship, his brilliance as a speaker, and his political ability, but also by reason of a quality which seems even rarer in the Senate than any of these—genuine personal independence.”⁷⁰ The *Gulfport Herald* went so far as to say that the people of Mississippi should draft the Senator into the Governor’s chair for at least one term that he might add luster to the position and that Mississippi might give him that expression of genuine love and respect.⁷¹

Thus Williams went off the national stage, and his going was bemoaned as the passing of a national figure—not just the leaving of a Senator from Mississippi. Another national figure left Washington at the same time; the names of the two men during the past thirty years had been many times linked. Uncle Joe Cannon was spoken of as the man whose going was the greatest loss to the House, where he had served, with the exception of four years, since the Administration of President Grant. Williams was accorded the same place in relation to the Senate. One editor, in commenting on the departure of the two men, spoke of “John Sharp” as Uncle Joe’s “old friend and foe.”⁷² One went South to spend the rest of his life at Cedar Grove. The other, then eighty-seven years old, went westward to Danville, Illinois, to live out the remainder of his days among the people he had served for half a century.

After he was out of Washington, the Senator wanted to be entirely free from the politics that had occupied so great a part of his life. When Senator Stephens arranged to have the *Record* sent to Cedar Grove, Williams wrote that he did “not care a damn thing about reading the *Congressional Record*.”⁷³ Perhaps Williams was getting temperamental. Sometimes he wrote a letter like that above when someone

⁷⁰ *Independent*, March 17, 1923.

⁷¹ Quoted in the *Yazoo City Yazoo County News*, March 5, 1923.

⁷² *New York Times*, March 6, 1923.

⁷³ Interview with former Senator Hubert D. Stephens, July 22, 1937.

suggested that he might be interested in politics. Again, he was apt to say or write something that revealed the fact that his interest was as real and his insight as keen as ever.

When President Harding died in August, 1923, the former Senator came out of retirement long enough to speak in Jackson. He also wrote a letter to the *New York Times* giving his estimate of the dead President. Incidentally, he revealed a real understanding of the political situation out of which he had officially passed. Williams felt that Harding was "affable, tactful, big hearted, and possessed ability," but that his premature death left unanswered the question of whether or not "he would have proved a leader of his party and shown initiative in great policies." ⁷⁴

The political world could not be entirely shut out, even by one who wished it. There was one phase of his life in Washington which the recluse at Cedar Grove did not seek to forget—his attachment to his friends. Soon after he reached home, he sent Joe Tumulty an autographed photograph, and furnished his friends with this laconic picture of his new life: "Flowers blooming. Strawberries have come. Entertaining grandchildren who have a new pony." ⁷⁵

Tumulty and other intimate friends drew from him a fine example of his irrepressible humor in the form of a New Year's letter to them in 1924: "The world will never be right until John Barleycorn, the dear, old disappointing wretch and encourager of illusions shall by international League decree, be limited to our plantation in our precinct of Yazoo County in the Prohibition State of Mississippi and the religious, sober, and retired Statesman who lives there, appointed the curator and the tutor with full power of control over his person and property. . . .

⁷⁴ *New York Times*, August 4, 1923.

⁷⁵ Williams to Joseph P. Tumulty, May 5, 1923, in possession of Mr. Tumulty.

"How did you manage to add a moral tone to your society by securing the presence of the St. Phil Roche and Cardinal Joseph Tumulty and Col. Tom Kellar?

"Give them, at least, my respectful and sympathetic salutations and express the hope that they will improve their association with the New Year. If not, may the Lord have mercy on their souls and stomachs." ⁷⁶

In the same delightful vein was his reply to a telegram from Robinson, Harrison, Pittman, Roche, Tumulty, and others, dated June 13, 1924, to tell him that they were gathered at Roche's home at the annual Williams dinner and were finding it to be "the case of Hamlet without Hamlet." ⁷⁷ "Your cruel unprovoked and unnecessary attempt to tantalize me by a limb of fruit I cannot reach is at hand," he wrote. "You have aroused two bad passions in my heart—envy, because I could not be there, and impotent hatred of that which I helped bring on an unsuspecting and unhappy people." ⁷⁸

The death of Woodrow Wilson in February, 1924, brought Williams out of retirement to pay glowing tribute to the friend he had loved so long and supported so faithfully. He went to Jackson, and there on February 19, paid homage to the great war President as man, friend, statesman, President, and leader of world vision. "The greatest man of this generation died yesterday morning—the man with the farthest vision into the needs of the future, a devotee of the religion of peace on earth and good will among men. . . . When rightly viewed his is not only the greatest but the most pathetic figure of the generation—another martyr to a temporarily 'lost cause.' . . .

"His place in history is safe as one of our four really

⁷⁶ *Id.* to *id.*, January 1, 1924, *ibid.* This letter was addressed "To The Holy Army of Martyrs to John Barleycorn."

⁷⁷ Joseph P. Tumulty and others to Williams, June 13, 1924, in Williams Papers, Cedar Grove Plantation.

⁷⁸ Williams to Tumulty and Harrison, June 16, 1924, in possession of Mr. Tumulty. Tumulty was addressed as "Secretary Emeritus" and Harrison as "Keynoter" of the "Annual Williams Dinner Sponges."

great Presidents—Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Wilson. . . .

“Now about the man—irrespective of high station and high achievement. Some people there are, or at least once were, who said he was ‘cold.’ . . . Of course, a man like Wilson did not ‘carry his heart on his sleeve for daws to peck at.’ No really tender and therefore sensitive man can afford to do that—only the superficial, to whom emotion is not sacred, may.

“There were others to cite with disapproval, the few passionate and bitter things he said of some of the men he deemed disloyal and untrue. These outbursts, by the way, are not the traits of ‘cold’ men. I think I knew it was not the sinner he hated but the sin, nor were they his enemies, whom he excoriated, but the shifty or unscrupulous enemies of a holy cause. . . .

“You have also heard it said that he was impatient of difference of opinion, and intolerant of opposition. He was, as some one has well said: ‘Only impatient of slow heads and intolerant of bad hearts.’ . . .

“One man is reported to have said: that he ‘feared’ Wilson was ‘incapable of lasting friendship.’ I stand here in my own person, as an enduring demonstration of the falsity of that insinuated slur. Besides me, there are hundreds of living men, who can, and on occasion will, tell you of his tolerance of sincere opposition, of his readiness to change opinion, when convinced, though only when convinced by reasons sounding in more than mere expediency, and tell you of the lasting loyalty of his friendship. . . . My little span of life remaining shall know no day nor hour, when I shall be untrue to his high ideal, nor shall I [by] vote or voice, as best I may in my seclusion, fail to help reward those who are true and help to punish those who are not true to it. Nor shall I do it either solely for his sake—warm friend as he was—but chiefly for the Vision’s sake!” ⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Jackson *Daily News*, February 19, 1924.

The master of Cedar Grove was not forgotten just because he was no longer in the public eye. On July 30, 1925, disreputable looking but lovable old Hambone "mediated": "Dey tells me dis heah's Senatah John Sharp Williams' birf'day, Today;—well, I *wuz* gittin' sorter lonesome but, Bress God, all de quality folks ain' dead yit!!!"⁸⁰ All over the country his friends echoed the sentiment.

The only time during the years of retirement that the Sage of Cedar Grove could be persuaded to talk freely for publication was the occasion when the *New York Times* sent a reporter to visit the Senator. Williams hesitated to break his long-established rule, but changed his mind because this paper was such "an old and fair and esteemed friend of many, many years' standing."⁸¹ Although the reporter arrived at Cedar Grove unexpectedly, he received a warm welcome. The retired statesman expressed his thoughts with a keenness of insight and clarity of expression that revealed a mind as alert as it had been in the days when the Senator matched wits with the greatest statesmen of the nation.

They began by discussing the President. "I like Calvin Coolidge, for I know he is clean and I think he has made as good a President as any Republican could. This is not saying much from my standpoint," Williams added with a twinkle in his eyes, "but the fact is, I have a personal weakness for the man outside of his politics. I do not think he should seek another nomination and I do not believe he is seeking one." When Hoover's name was mentioned, Williams remarked that it had taken Hoover "a mighty long time to find out what party he belonged to." He added: "There is no doubt of Mr. Hoover's ability as an executive." But no matter how much praise he had for Hoover, he

⁸⁰ *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, July 30, 1925.

⁸¹ *New York Times*, September 11, 1927. L. C. Speers wrote of his visit in a feature article, "An Elder Statesman Takes Stock of America," which appeared in the *Sunday Times* of the above date.

could not get away from the reflection that "sad to say, Hoover is a Republican."

Possible candidates for the Democratic nomination the next year furnished the next topic for discussion. When Alfred E. Smith was mentioned, Williams replied: "I do not know the Governor, and I am not going to try and pass judgment on him." Senator Reed's name brought a series of comments on Reed's attitude toward Wilson and the League, and concluded with the remark: "He is a very brilliant fellow and also, very unfortunately, a very mulish one." Williams refused to talk about McAdoo but waxed eloquent over Governor Albert C. Ritchie of Maryland: "If Ritchie could be nominated and elected I would jump very high."

When asked what was the trouble with the Democratic party, Williams quoted his patron saint: "Mr. Jefferson in one of his letters said that 'we must constantly recur to first principles.' Not having done that, and not doing that now, is the real trouble of the Democratic Party."

The conversation shifted to the new radical movements in the country and Williams laughed: "I am not a radical, and I am not a conservative. Nobody but a fool is always either. I am a progressive on some things and even reactionary on some others. Names don't amount to much, whether you are a Republican, a Democrat or a Progressive. Everything depends on the question at issue. That always sounded like common sense anyhow, whether it be political philosophy or not."

After the visitor had obtained his story, the two men were joined by the mistress of the plantation. As the three of them walked down toward the gate, they were talking of the Golden Wedding anniversary that was to be celebrated the next month. Mrs. Williams told their guest that her husband persisted in going out into the garden so early every morning that he got his feet wet. "But it doesn't seem

to hurt him," she concluded. "I guess I am pretty tough," came back the lively comment from the grizzled Senator.⁸²

The interesting and clear-cut comments recorded in this interview disprove the idea that Williams lost all interest in public events and refused to read anything on the subject. He wrote to his old friend Clay Sharkey that one of the ways he kept up with current happenings was to read the *Literary Digest* from cover to cover every week when it arrived at Cedar Grove. He did not go out much, but that was largely because he had become so deaf that he got nothing out of crowds but annoyance.⁸³ "I am doing my visiting mainly at home now but get nothing spirituous though much spiritual thereby," he wrote Pat Harrison.⁸⁴

On October 2, 1927, Mr. and Mrs. Williams celebrated their Golden Wedding. Fifty years earlier, they had started life together at Cedar Grove as a young couple without a great deal but love and debts. During those years, they had reached the heights of fame and public acclaim together; now they were back at Cedar Grove, happy with the love of children, grandchildren, and a host of friends. Among those who called during the day was Harris Dickson, who wrote a special account for the *New York Times*.⁸⁵ Even that does not have the quaint charm that is found in the account of the occasion from the pen of Williams himself as he wrote to a lifetime friend: "Your nice Golden Wedding Anniversary letter at hand. Betty and I appreciate it highly. If Betty had any faults they are so small as to not be worth mentioning. She has put up with half a century of my faults and vagaries extremely well. She hasn't been three wives, but just one. She is not even gray haired although within six months of being 73 years old.

"We had a house full of company who brought a perfect

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Williams to Clay Sharkey, September 25, 1926, in possession of Mr. Pat Sharkey.

⁸⁴ *Id.* to Pat Harrison, September 23, 1927, in Harrison Papers.

⁸⁵ *New York Times*, October 3, 1927.

glory of flowers and other modest but welcome little things to show their love and loyalty. All our children were here except Kit and Sally who could not leave home. The grandchildren were here; waited on the company between bites of candy and cake. We drank a toast to the bride!"⁸⁶

Williams was invited to make an address presenting the Jefferson Davis bronze monument at its unveiling at Vicksburg on October 12, 1927. On the appointed day, thousands of people gathered to commemorate the life of Jefferson Davis and the Confederate cause. No one present could fail to catch the significance of the occasion. A monument to the President of the Confederacy was being unveiled on property belonging to the United States government, and it was received in behalf of the United States by Major General Frank B. Cheatham of the United States Army. The Confederate reunion had been in session in Vicksburg for several days, and the dedication of the memorial was the climax. The October air was cold and crisp, but thousands stood with bared heads to witness an event to which many of them had long looked forward. Judge Harris Dickson presided and presented the memorial to the state of Mississippi. Governor Dennis Murphree accepted the memorial for the state, the statue was unveiled, and a military salute was fired. Then the band struck up "Dixie" and the three hundred old men in gray with rebel yells led the cheering crowd.⁸⁷ Williams presented the memorial to the United States in an inspiring address, the last formal address he ever made. The South felt that a dream of half a century had been fulfilled. Davis had received the honor due him for his services to the Confederacy.

Although Williams never made another prepared address, Mississippi politics called him into action on several occasions. In 1927, he gave his support to Dennis Murphree,

⁸⁶ Williams to Clay Sharkey, October 2, 1927, in possession of Mr. Pat Sharkey.

⁸⁷ *New York Times*, October 14, 1927.

who was running for the governorship against former Governor Theodore G. Bilbo. He paid no attention to the threats that "he would be attended to" if he did not stay out of the fight.⁸⁸ He went over to Vicksburg and spoke briefly in the stadium of the baseball park before a large and highly appreciative audience, just to show his colors. He told his friends that he did not consider himself politically emasculated just because he was no longer active in the political world. He did not make a speech, but after explaining his presence, concluded with these telling words: "One other thing, my wife 'the latchets of whose shoes I am unworthy to unloose,' sent by me a message to the women of Vicksburg and Warren County. She bade me tell them that she would have been with me 'to show her colors' and make her voice heard for Murphree and against Bilbo in unison with mine, if only she had thought herself physically fit for the trip." ⁸⁹

In 1931 the venerable statesman quit his retreat again to lift his voice once more in a gubernatorial campaign. This time, it was to support Hugh L. White. The Williams and White families had intermarried back in Tennessee before migrating to Mississippi. White was to speak in Benton on July 25, and the Sage of Cedar Grove agreed to introduce the speaker and say a few words in his behalf. "My friends and neighbors," he began, "I am better aware than even you are of the fact that my time for making an effective public speech is past." He went on to tell them that conditions of political and economic chaos and confusion in Mississippi were so drastic that he was glad to lift his voice to support the man who gave promise of leadership. "Of course," he concluded, "my judgment about politics now is not as good as it once was. When a man gets to be seventy-seven years old and has only four teeth, two in the upper jaw and two in the lower, and they don't hit, when he has

⁸⁸ *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, August 19, 1927.

⁸⁹ *Vicksburg Evening Post*, August 20, 1927.

only one ear out of which he can hear at all, and can not hear well out of that, and has lost most of his hair, he is not as good a judge of anything as he was in earlier years, not only of politics, but of a good dinner or a pretty woman!"⁹⁰

In the summer of 1928, Williams supported Alfred E. Smith for the Presidency when the situation seemed to indicate that the South might falter. "I shall support the nominee," he wrote, "for other reasons, based on Jeffersonian principles of American and world Democracy far transcending in importance any question of any man's religious convictions—a matter between God and him, not between men and him, and far transcending in importance any question of the enforcement of any sumptuary law."⁹¹ As the religious factor was injected more and more into the situation, Williams forgot his silence and wrote a letter to the *New York Times* in which he asserted that he was not afraid that the South would fail to go Democratic. He felt that Tammany and prohibition were being used to conceal religious intolerance, uncharity, and bigotry but that few people would be deceived. "So far from holding any particular Christian sect politically taboo," he declared, "I would vote for a Jew, who is not a Christian at all, if he were an honest, competent, and faithful Democratic Jew. I know personally two or three Jews who would make excellent Presidents because they are honest, capable and fundamentally Democrats, as well as faithfully Democratic." He assured the *Times* that the only thing he was intolerant of was religious intolerance.⁹²

He went so far as to defend Tammany and to express the opinion that the South owed Tammany a "deep and ineffaceable debt of gratitude" for the friendship that it had rendered the South in its hour of need following the Civil

⁹⁰ *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, July 25, 1931. Williams to Clay Sharkey, November 7, 1930, in possession of Mr. Pat Sharkey: "I shall join you in voting for Hugh White."

⁹¹ *New York Times*, July 21, 1928.

⁹² *Ibid.*, September 15, 1928.

War.⁹³ The outcome of the election was a disappointment to the Senator, but he was not one of those who "thinks that a given Presidential election is the only one that is ever going to be."⁹⁴

In the summer of 1932, although by that time he was nearly deaf, Williams tried to listen over the radio to what was happening at the Democratic convention in Chicago.⁹⁵ He could hear hardly a word, and so drafted different members of the family through the various sessions of the convention to listen and relay the news to him. When word came that the convention was considering the abrogation of the two-thirds rule, he wired former Senator James Reed of Missouri: "The two thirds rule has been the bulwark of the South for the past hundred years. To throw it into the discard now would be utterly ridiculous."⁹⁶ Before the campaign ended in victory for his party, the Senator was dead. With him went the last of his kind. He himself had written Clay Sharkey in 1931: "You and I are nearly the last of the old guard of American democracy."⁹⁷

The years had flowed swiftly at Cedar Grove and had brought the Senator all that he had hoped of peace and happiness. His life was just as he had dreamed it would be while he was spending those last months in Washington when he had been so impatient to get away from it all—away to his ancestral home, his children, his books, and his leisure. The twilight years were full of peace for him as he gracefully grew old "in love with Mississippi and with humanity."⁹⁸ Life and philosophy became his major interests. He grew philosophical over his own life. An example of his line of thought is found in a letter to his son—a letter which reveals a side of the Senator that was seldom seen

⁹³ *Ibid.*, September 9, 1928.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, September 15, 1928.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, October 2, 1932.

⁹⁶ *Jackson Daily News*, June 17, 1932.

⁹⁷ Williams to Clay Sharkey, February 20, 1931, in possession of Mr. Pat Sharkey.

⁹⁸ *Jackson Daily Clarion-Ledger*, October 13, 1929.

even by those who were intimate with him. Williams admitted that he had been thinking a lot about his children, and was hoping that they would avoid some of his mistakes. The Senator recalled that during the years just after his marriage, when he was having a hard fight financially, he began drinking too much. "It has been a cause of humiliation and disappointment ever since. Just at a moment of crisis when a clear head and a pious purpose were most needed the temptation to get rid of the necessary thought to accomplish things was strongest. I need not tell you how much better and greater I could have been and would have been if I had been able to count always on myself. I regard my life as a failure. Not as it stands in comparison with others, but as compared to what I had it in me to be and to do." ⁹⁹

Another letter which shows the tender personality that Williams revealed to his children was written to one of his daughters-in-law: "It has been too cold to turn over after one gets in bed. You didn't have to write about the Christmas check. I deserve no thanks. I sent checks because I am too lazy to think up what my children and children-in-law and especially grandchildren want. The ponds have been frozen over and I am feeding the birds in this spell of snow and red-birds, woodpeckers, wrens, blackbirds, larks just cover the east walk where I have spread hulled oats for them. . . .

"Come when you can. Kiss Gladys on the lobe of the ear and Julia on her left big toe and make the two Kits kiss you for me. Let the children write when they please. Don't make their letters to us a bore to them." ¹⁰⁰

On Saturday, July 30, 1932, Senator Williams celebrated his seventy-eighth birthday. The next day he suffered a fall, which was the beginning of the end. Several times within

⁹⁹ Williams to Christopher H. Williams, Jr., February 8, 1927, in possession of Mr. Christopher H. Williams, Jr., Washington, D.C.

¹⁰⁰ *Id.* to Mrs. Christopher H. Williams, Jr., January 24, 1930, *ibid.*

a few days, he injured himself by falling. Physicians thought at the time that the injuries were not serious, and that he would recover. But he did not respond to treatment, and, although there was apparently no organic reason, he grew weaker. The doctors could say nothing but that his age, weakness, and shock from the fall made his condition serious.¹⁰¹ For two months, he "slowly faded into the shadows." His mind was perfectly clear, and most of the time he had no pain. His body was just tired and worn out; "the sands of life were running low."¹⁰² His mind was at rest, and he seemed to know that the end was approaching. "I've done things that seemed at the time worth doing," he said. "I think that if a man can get to my age and, looking back, believe a majority of things he did were worth the effort, he has nothing to regret."¹⁰³ About midnight of September 27, his soul passed into the Beyond. His death scene had the quiet and peace he had hoped it would have when, years before, he had come back to Cedar Grove for a happy old age and a quiet end among the things dear to him.

When the news flashed over the country that John Sharp Williams was dead, messages came pouring back from people in all walks of life who had been his friends. Joe Tumulty wired: "I have just received word of the Senator's death. As the secretary and intimate associate of Woodrow Wilson I can bear testimony that he had no more devoted, loyal, or useful friend than John Sharp Williams. He had the nobility and grandeur of an old fashioned Democrat and loved Democratic things and Democratic principles and traditions. During the World War he was a stout and steady defender of Woodrow Wilson and his ideals of world peace. A mighty pillar of peace has fallen."

John N. Garner sent the following message: "My heart is filled with grief. A great statesman, a worthy citizen, and a

¹⁰¹ *New York Times*, August 4, 1932.

¹⁰² Frederick Sullens, "Last Days of John Sharp Williams," in *Jackson Daily News*, September 29, 1932.

¹⁰³ *New York Times*, October 2, 1932.

loyal friend has passed." These words came from Senator Claude Swanson of Virginia: "I am distressed beyond measure at the death of my dear friend, and feel a deep sense of personal loss. For no one had I a warmer affection or higher esteem. He rendered distinguished service to his country, and had the most brilliant mind of any man it has been my privilege to know."¹⁰⁴ And so the messages ran—personal, yet full of praise for the fine statesmanship of the man who had passed.

The people of Mississippi wanted to pay special honor to the dead statesman. Governor Sennett Conner requested that he be granted the privilege of sending a military escort to Cedar Grove to bring the body to Jackson, where it would lie in state. The Williams family, speaking through John Sharp, Jr., expressed appreciation for the honor, but declined because they thought it was the last thing the Senator would have wanted. In fact, near the end, he had especially asked that his body be given a simple burial at the plantation, "with the plain Episcopal services, with nothing added and nothing deducted."¹⁰⁵ In accordance with that wish, on the morning of September 29, the flower-covered casket was borne out of the house, past his empty chair under the cedar trees, and across the lovely lawns of Cedar Grove to rest in the family burial plot. The service was simple. It was read by the Episcopal rector from Yazoo City, assisted by two other ministers. There was no eulogy—only the "plain Episcopal services, with nothing added and nothing deducted," as he had wished. His wife and all his children were there. Over the state, flags were at half mast, and, in Yazoo City, all business houses were closed at the time when the quiet procession wound its way from the door of the ancestral plantation home out through the cedars and crape myrtles that were the glory of Cedar Grove. Thou-

¹⁰⁴ Jackson *Daily News*, October 2, 1932. All telegrams from editorial, "He Was a Democrat," by Fred Sullens.

¹⁰⁵ Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, September 29, 1932.

sands of people joined in the service of tribute—people from all walks of life—from the Governor of the state to the humble Negroes who had “libb’d on de plantation since marse John was a chile.” It was a fitting close for the drama of his life as the last planter-statesman of the Old South.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, September 29, 1932; Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, September 28, 29, 1932; Jackson *Daily News*, September 28, 29, 30, 1932; New York *Times*, September 29, October 2, 1932.

CRITICAL ESSAY ON AUTHORITIES

Manuscript Collections

The most important single collection for this study is the Williams Papers in the Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress. This correspondence covers very thoroughly Williams' years in the Senate, 1911-1923. There are some letters as early as 1907, which deal with the senatorial campaign and a few written after his retirement from public life. This collection contains approximately 25,000 letters and papers packed into more than 200 boxes. At one time or another Williams corresponded with practically all of the public men of his day. As noted in the Preface, Williams destroyed all his correspondence relating to his career in the House of Representatives. Only a few scattered items of that period remain.

Several persons have graciously permitted the use of Williams letters in their possession. Some three or four thousand manuscripts remain at the Williams home, Cedar Grove Plantation, and these have been used through the courtesy of John Sharp Williams, Jr. Miss Lucile Banks of Memphis, Tennessee, gave access to the letters which Williams wrote to her father, Robert W. Banks, and also to her personal correspondence with the Senator. The late Senator Pat Harrison of Mississippi permitted the use of his private files. Pat Sharkey of Glen Allan, Mississippi, submitted the letters of Williams to his father, Clay Sharkey, which were especially valuable for the period of Williams' life after his retirement. Some of the Williams-Frederick Sullens correspondence was gathered from the private files of Major Sullens, Jackson, Mississippi. Joseph P. Tumulty, Washington, D.C., gave the use of letters in his personal files. Ray Stannard Baker of Amherst, Massachusetts, made available copies of some Williams-Woodrow Wilson correspondence from the Wilson Papers.

Several contemporaries of Williams in public life and members of the Williams family have written letters to the author or have consented to the use of information given to the writer in personal interview.

Published Sources

Although not containing much actual Williams material, there are a few published sources which were helpful in the preparation of this study. Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd (eds.), *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 6 vols. (New York, 1925-1926), contain the articles and speeches of Wilson and were helpful in the study of the problems of the Wilson Administration. Other collected papers of use are these: Arthur B. Darling (ed.), *The Public Papers of Francis G. Newlands*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1932); Anne W. Lane and Louise H. Wall (eds.), *The Letters of Franklin K. Lane, Personal and Political* (New York, 1922); Henry Cabot Lodge (ed.), *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1918*, 2 vols. (New York, 1925); and Elihu Root, *The Military and Colonial Policy of the United States* (Cambridge, 1916), edited by Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott.

Among the party documents of value to this study are the following: *The Campaign Text Book of the Democratic Party for the Presidential Election of 1892* (New York, 1892); *The Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention, 1904* (St. Louis, 1904); the *Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention, 1912* (Baltimore, 1912), all published by the Democratic National Committee; and the *Republican Campaign Textbook* (Washington, 1896) published by the Republican National Committee.

Official Government Publications

The *Congressional Record* (Washington, 1873-) was used for Williams' whole public career, 1893-1923. To trace Williams' part in House and Senate debates would have been impossible without the use of the *Record*. Especially did the writer depend on this source in writing of Williams' House career because of the scarcity of correspondence for that period.

The following government publications also proved useful: *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1927* (Washington, 1928); *Compendium of the Eleventh Census; 1890*, 3 vols. (Washington, 1892-1897); *Official Congressional Directory, 1893-1927* (Washington, 1894-1928); *Official Register of the United States, 1892* (Washington, 1892); *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1921* (Washington, 1922); the *United States Senate Documents*, 54 Congress-56 Congress;

Mississippi Senate Journal, 1904 (Nashville, 1904); and Dunbar Rowland (ed.), *Official and Statistical Register of Mississippi, 1920-1924* (Jackson, 1924). *The Official German Documents Relating to the World War*, 2 vols. (New York, 1923), published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace were useful in the study of the war period.

Presidential messages to Congress of importance to this study may be found in James D. Richardson (ed.), *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902*, 10 vols. (Washington, 1897-1905).

Newspapers and Periodicals

Valuable material about the Williams family in Tennessee was found in the *Memphis Daily Appeal*, 1857-1862. Of inestimable help in the study of Williams' early political career was the file of the *Natchez Daily Democrat* for 1892-1910. Useful for the same period of study was the *Jackson State Ledger*, 1892-1893, a semiweekly paper which combined with the *Jackson Daily Clarion* in 1893 to form the *Jackson Daily Clarion-Ledger*. Fortunately, a complete file of the *Daily Clarion-Ledger* since 1899 was available. The *Jackson Evening News* beginning May 16, 1907, was called the *Daily News*. Before May 16, a morning edition of this paper had been called the *Daily News*, an afternoon edition the *Evening News*, and a Sunday edition the *Sunday News*. The *Jackson Daily News* covering the years 1907-1932 was especially useful, since it was often at loggerheads editorially with the *Clarion-Ledger*; the two papers complement each other very well. In order to gather press comment of national importance, the file of the *New York Times* was traced from 1893 when Williams entered public life until his death in 1932. The *Washington Evening Star* was used for the years 1903-1923. The *Washington Post* for 1904-1915 was consulted frequently. The *Memphis Commercial Appeal* for the years 1917-1932 was available.

In addition to the above-mentioned newspapers which were of great value, many papers were consulted for specific references to Williams. The latter with their dates are listed below: *New York American*, 1917; *Macon (Miss.) Beacon*, 1915; *Natchez (Miss.) Bulletin*, 1907; *Vicksburg (Miss.) Herald*, 1917; *Columbus (Miss.) Dispatch*, 1915; *Vicksburg (Miss.) Evening Post*, 1927; *Chicago Examiner*, 1915; *Tifton (Ga.) Gazette*, 1919; *Boston Herald*, 1917; *Kosciusko (Miss.) Herald*, 1915; *Canton*

(Miss.) *Madison County Herald*, 1907; *Winston-Salem Journal*, 1927; *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 1918; *Hattiesburg (Miss.) News*, 1916; *Yazoo City (Miss.) Yazoo County News*, 1923; *Memphis News Scimitar*, 1917; *New Orleans Picayune*, 1908; *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 1917; *Mobile Register*, 1917; *Yazoo City (Miss.) Yazoo Sentinel*, 1899; *Meridian (Miss.) Star*, 1916; *Baltimore Sun*, 1907, 1917, 1923; *New York Sun*, 1893, 1917; *Washington Times*, 1903, 1916; *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 1932; *New York World*, 1904, 1915.

The periodicals which were of great importance in the study of Williams' career are the *Nation* (New York, 1865-), 1893-1904; *Public Opinion* (Washington, 1886-1906), 1894-1903; and *Review of Reviews* (New York, 1890-), 1894-1908. Other magazines which were used appear below with their dates: *Arena* (Boston, 1889-1909), 1908; *Forum* (New York, 1886-), 1904; *Independent* (New York, Boston, 1848-), 1904, 1906, 1923; *Iron City Trades Journal* (Pittsburgh, 1908-1916), 1915; *Munsey's Magazine* (New York, 1889-), 1913; *Outlook* (New York, 1870-), 1904; *Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine* (Atlanta, 1907-1917), 1907; *World's Work* (New York, 1900-), 1904.

Reminiscent Works and Autobiographies

A number of Williams' contemporaries in public life have written reminiscences which proved helpful. William Jennings Byran and Mary Baird Byran, *The Memoirs of William Jennings Bryan* (Philadelphia, 1925), is interesting because Williams and Bryan so often disagreed. Champ Clark, *My Quarter Century of American Politics*, 2 vols. (New York, 1920), covers practically the whole period that Williams was in public life. Clark and Williams were close personal friends while they were both in the House and their friendship continued after Williams went to the Senate. Clark's book reveals a marked admiration for his colleague. George Frisbie Hoar, *Autobiography of Seventy Years*, 2 vols. (New York, 1903), is the story of a long and brilliant career by a Republican from Massachusetts. An account of the Wilson Administration by the Secretary of Agriculture, who stresses the rural program, is available in David F. Houston, *Eight Years with Wilson's Cabinet*, 2 vols. (Garden City, N.Y., 1926). Thomas R. Marshall, *Recollections of Thomas R. Marshall, A Hoosier Salad* (Indianapolis, 1925), is a very readable account of the life of a Hoosier politician and philosopher who was Vice-President during the eight years of

Williams' tenure in the Senate. Only the chapters relating to this period were examined. Norval Richardson, *My Diplomatic Education* (New York, 1929), contains an account of Williams' aid to this aspiring young fellow-Mississippian.

Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt, An Autobiography* (New York, 1926), gives the President's viewpoint on some of the important measures enacted during Williams' period in the House. William G. McAdoo, *Crowded Years* (New York, 1931), is the memoir of a faithful Democrat who served long in public life. Oscar W. Underwood, *Drifting Sands of Party Politics* (New York, 1928), was not published until after its author's death. Underwood and Williams were personal friends and fought together for some of the most important legislation of the Wilson Administration. James E. Watson, *As I Knew Them* (Indianapolis, 1936), is a thoroughly delightful commentary on most of the public men of the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth century. Watson, an Indiana Republican whose political views were nearly always diametrically opposed to those of Williams, was a good friend of the Mississippian. Mrs. Edith Bolling Wilson, *My Memoir* (Indianapolis, 1939), pays tribute to the friendship of her husband and Williams. Robert M. La Follette, *La Follette's Autobiography* (Madison, Wis., 1913), is the account of the role played by an outstanding leader in the Progressive movement. Williams had respect for him until La Follette's opposition to American entrance into the World War changed his opinion.

Biographies

The only attempt at a biography of Williams is Harris Dickson's *An Old-Fashioned Senator, A Story-Biography of John Sharp Williams* (New York, 1925). As the title of the book indicates, Dickson does not claim to have written a critical biography. Although the book contains some things that cannot be substantiated, it is valuable because Dickson was a personal friend of the Senator's and gathered much of his material in personal conference with him. Dickson succeeded in catching something of the spirit and flavor of Williams in a very readable book. Herbert L. McCleskey wrote a master's thesis at the University of Mississippi in 1933 on "The Public Career of John Sharp Williams." McCleskey had no access to the Williams Papers or other manuscript source materials, however, and was

not able to handle adequately such a broad subject in the scope of a master's thesis. A number of biographical sketches of Williams appeared in periodicals during his public life. These will be listed later under special articles.

In 1912 Williams delivered a series of eight lectures at Columbia University on the subject "Thomas Jefferson." Later the Senator revised the manuscript and had the lectures published as a book by the Columbia University Press under the title *Thomas Jefferson, His Permanent Influence on American Institutions* (New York, 1913). This is the only book that Williams wrote. It contains some biographical material on its author.

Since one of the most significant periods of Williams' career was his senatorship under Wilson, biographies of the wartime President were indispensable. Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson; Life and Letters*, 8 vols. (Garden City, N.Y., 1927-1939), is a monumental work which no student of the Wilson era can afford to ignore. The volumes contain a number of references to Williams. William E. Dodd, *Woodrow Wilson and His Work* (Garden City, N.Y., 1920), is still helpful although it was written at too early a date to be definitive. Joseph P. Tumulty, *Woodrow Wilson As I Know Him* (Garden City, N.Y., 1921), an intimate account by the President's private secretary, contains much material of value. Tumulty and Williams were close friends. David Loth, *Woodrow Wilson, the Fifteenth Point* (New York, 1941), is an interesting book that sheds no new light on the war President.

Biographies of a number of other Presidents with whom Williams was associated were useful to some degree: Denis T. Lynch, *Grover Cleveland, A Man Four-Square* (New York, 1932); Robert M. McElroy, *Grover Cleveland, the Man and the Statesman*, 2 vols. (New York, 1923); Allan Nevins, *Grover Cleveland; A Study in Courage* (New York, 1932); Charles S. Olcott, *The Life of William McKinley*, 2 vols. (New York, 1916); Joseph B. Bishop, *Theodore Roosevelt and His Time Shown in His Own Letters*, 2 vols. (New York, 1920); Henry F. Pringle, *Theodore Roosevelt, A Biography* (New York, 1931); Francis McHale, *President and Chief Justice; The Life and Public Service of William Howard Taft* (Philadelphia, 1931); and Henry F. Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft*, 2 vols. (New York, 1939).

Helpful biographies of some of Williams' contemporaries in

public life are the following: Sam H. Acheson, *Joe Bailey, the Last Democrat* (New York, 1932); James A. Barnes, *John G. Carlisle, Financial Statesman* (New York, 1931); Robert D. Bowden, *Boies Penrose, Symbol of an Era* (New York, 1937); Claude G. Bowers, *Beveridge and the Progressive Era* (New York, 1932); Katherine G. Busbey (ed.), *Uncle Joe Cannon; The Story of a Pioneer American, as told to L. White Busbey* (New York, 1927); Edward N. Dingley, *The Life and Times of Nelson Dingley, Jr.* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1902); Marie D. Gorgas and Burton J. Hendrick, *William Crawford Gorgas, His Life and Work* (Garden City, N.Y., 1924); Burton J. Hendrick, *The Life and Letters of Walter Hines Page*, 3 vols. (Garden City, N.Y., 1922-1925); Paxton Hibben, *The Peerless Leader, William Jennings Bryan* (New York, 1929); Harold B. Hinton, *Cordell Hull, A Biography* (Garden City, N.Y., 1942); Philip C. Jessup, *Elihu Root*, 2 vols. (New York, 1938); Claudius O. Johnson, *Borah of Idaho* (New York, 1936); William Lawrence, *Henry Cabot Lodge; A Biographical Sketch* (New York, 1925); Samuel W. McCall, *The Life of Thomas Brackett Reed* (New York, 1914); Richard L. Neuberger and Stephen B. Kahn, *Integrity; The Life of George W. Norris* (New York, 1937); James E. Palmer, Jr., *Carter Glass, Unreconstructed Rebel* (Roanoke, Va., 1938); Charles M. Pepper, *The Life and Times of Henry Gassaway Davis, 1823-1916* (New York, 1920); William A. Robinson, *Thomas B. Reed, Parliamentarian* (New York, 1930); Nathaniel W. Stephenson, *Nelson W. Aldrich, A Leader in American Politics* (New York, 1930); Rixey Smith and Norman Beasley, *Carter Glass, A Biography* (New York, 1939); Wayne C. Williams, *William Jennings Bryan* (New York, 1936).

Special Articles

Published articles which were profitable in the preparation of this book are Ray Stannard Baker, "The Negro in American Politics," in *American Magazine* (New York), LXVI (1908), 169-80; James A. Barnes, "The Gold-Standard Democrats and the Party Conflict," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (Cedar Rapids), XVII (1930-1931), 422-50; Samuel G. Blythe, "The Gentleman from Mississippi," in *Saturday Evening Post* (Philadelphia), July 22, 1911; Nicholas Murray Butler, "Across the Busy Years—Fourteen Republic Conventions," in *Scribner's* (New York), XCIX (1936), 13-17, 77-81, 145-52, 225-29; George Creel, "The Carnival of Corruption in Mississippi," in *Cosmo-*

politan Magazine (New York), LI (1911), 725-35; Harris Dickson, "The Vardaman Idea," in *Saturday Evening Post*, April 27, 1907; R. T. W. Duke, Jr., "John Sharp Williams," in *Corks and Curls* (University, Va., 1915); George Gunton, "Mr. Williams' Convention Speech," in *Gunton's Magazine* (New York), XXVII (1904), 132-40.

John D. Hicks, "The Subtreasury: A Forgotten Plan for the Relief of Agriculture," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XV (1928-1929), 355-73; Edward M. Kingsbury, "John Sharp Williams, Leader," in *Bookman* (New York), XIX (1904), 168-71; Herman C. Nixon, "The Cleavage within the Farmers' Alliance Movement," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XV (1928-1929), 22-33; George W. Norris, "The Secret of His Power—A History of the Insurgent Movement in the House of Representatives," in *La Follette's Weekly Magazine* (Madison, Wis.), II (1910), 7-9; George C. Osborn, "Joseph G. Cannon and John Sharp Williams," in *Indiana Magazine of History* (Bloomington), XXXV (1939), 283-94; *id.*, "The Friendship of John Sharp Williams and Woodrow Wilson," in *Journal of Mississippi History* (Jackson), I (1939), 3-13; Frederick Palmer, "Williams versus Vardaman at Meridian," in *Collier's National Weekly* (New York), XLI (1907); Robert W. Watkins, "Personal Sketch of the Minority Leader in the House," in *Harper's Weekly* (New York), XLVIII (1904), 970-71; Judson C. Welliver, "The Triumph of the South," in *Munsey's Magazine* (New York), XLIX (1913), 731-43; *id.*, "Leaders of the New Congress," *ibid.*, XLVIII (1913), 715-28.

John Sharp Williams, "Control of Corporations. Persons and Firms Engaged in Interstate Commerce," in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Philadelphia), XLII (1912), 310-30; *id.*, "Federal Usurpations," *ibid.*, XXXII (1908), 185-211; *id.*, "'War to Stop War,'" *ibid.*, LXXII (1917), 178-85; *id.*, "The Democratic Party and the Railroad Question," in *Independent* (New York, Boston), LX (1906), 485-88; *id.*, "The Ties That Bind: Our National Sympathy with English Traditions, the French Republic, and the Russian Outburst of Liberty," in *National Geographic Magazine* (Washington, D.C.), XXXI (1917), 281-86; *id.*, "What Democracy Now Stands For," *Everybody's Magazine* (New York), X (1904), 180-84; *id.*, "Why Should a Man Vote the Democratic Ticket This Year," in *Independent*, LVII (1904), 964-67.

In addition to these published articles, two unpublished

manuscripts were of value: Cecil Johnson, "The Agrarian Crusade with Special Reference to Mississippi" (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1924); William D. McCain, "The Populist Party in Mississippi" (M.A. thesis, University of Mississippi, 1931).

General and Special Histories

A number of general works are necessary to a study of the period covered by this book. Davis R. Dewey, *National Problems, 1885-1897* (New York, 1907), Vol. XXIV of *The American Nation: A History*, edited by Albert B. Hart; Dwight L. Dumond, *Roosevelt to Roosevelt, the United States in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1937); Mark Sullivan, *Our Times; The United States, 1900-1925*, 6 vols. (New York, 1926-1935); Grover Cleveland, *Presidential Problems* (New York, 1904); Arthur W. Dunn, *From Harrison to Harding . . . , 1888-1921*, 2 vols. (New York, 1922); Herman H. Kohlsaat, *From McKinley to Harding* (New York, 1923); James Ford Rhodes, *The McKinley and Roosevelt Administrations, 1897-1909* (New York, 1922); Woodrow Wilson, *Congressional Government* (New York, 1885).

For material on financial and tariff problems of the period the following were consulted: Davis R. Dewey, *Financial History of the United States*, 8th ed. (New York, 1922); Richard T. Ely, *Taxation in American States and Cities* (New York, 1888); Edward Stanwood, *American Tariff Controversies in the Nineteenth Century*, 2 vols. (New York, 1903); Frank W. Taussig, *The Tariff History of the United States*, 7th ed. (New York, 1923); Carter Glass, *An Adventure in Constructive Finance* (Garden City, N.Y., 1927); Alexander D. Noyes, *Forty Years of American Finance* (New York, 1909).

For a background of Williams' years in Congress the following were examined: Hubert B. Fuller, *The Speakers of the House* (Boston, 1909); De Alva Stanwood Alexander, *History and Procedure of the House of Representatives* (New York, 1916); Paul De W. Hasbrouck, *Party Government in the House of Representatives* (New York, 1927); Samuel W. McCall, *The Business of Congress* (New York, 1911); Orlando O. Stealey, *Twenty Years in the Press Gallery* (New York, 1906). Also worthy of mention in this connection are a few books on party history during Williams' career: Charles W. Thompson, *Party Leaders of the Time* (New York, 1906); John D. Hicks, *The*

Populist Revolt (Minneapolis, 1931); Frederick E. Haynes, *Third Party Movements Since the Civil War* (Iowa City, 1916).

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